

# The Transition of Japanese Funeral Ceremony : Cultural and Business Perspective

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## I Introduction

### 1.1. Background

The modernization of Japan, which began in the Meiji (1868-1912), is the beginning of a change in all aspects. By the end of Sakoku politics, Japan had opened the country and had adapted culture and technology from European countries. In this period, the industrialization of Japan had also begun. As a result of the development of modern industry in Japan, there were emerged new industry cities such as Tokyo, Osaka and Nagoya which led to the transmigration of people into the towns so that caused an increasing the number of citizens.

After World War II (in the mid 1950s), Japan had a rapid economic growth. This economic growth caused a concentration of population in urban areas as shown in the census data of Japan's population in 1960 in the following table:

Group of Age (years old)	Percentage of population living in dense-populated area (%)
<15	24.5
15-44	43.3
45-64	15.4
>65	4.0

**Table 1.** Percentage of population living in dense-populated area

It can be seen from the table above that the young and productive age concentrated in urban areas, while the elderly lived in smaller communities or rural area. Based on the official census population of Japan before World War II, rural people is approximately 60% of the total population. This shows that the percentage of rural population plummet 45% and continues decreasing by about 2 or 3 percent annually. Moreover, the number of the eldest son in the family who moved out to the cities increased that caused a reduction of the member of the family in the rural area.

The table below shows the average number of family members who is continuously shrinking from year to year.

Year	1955	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980
Average	4.68	4.13	3.75	3.45	3.35	3.28

Tabel.2. Average number of family members

### 1.1.1. Industrialization in Japan

Industrialization in Japan took place since the Meiji era; it led the environmental factors for the company changes. These changes forced companies from various fields to rearrange the company's management. The changes of the business environment as a result of industrialization were also affecting the industry of *soogi* (services funerals). According to research by Suzuki Hikaru that change of the company's business environment of *soogi* occurred after World War II. Industrialization caused the massive urbanization, change in the family structure, the more specialist work, and the commercialization of funerals. These factors accelerated the growth of the funeral industry in Japan.

In the era before World War II, if any member of the Japanese community died, they gathered together and took their respective roles, such as calling the monk, announcing the information of death, buying the equipment that needed in the rituals of death, and booking coffin and souvenirs as a sign of gratitude for the mourners. The community cooperation or mutual assistance groups (Kumi or kogumi) consists of five or seven families that were fully responsible for the ceremony. These groups helped funeral ceremony as well as harvesting rice, build a house, fix the roof and set up the wedding and other public activities.

The image of communities helped funeral ceremony were slowly disappearing along with the arrival of industrialization. Until the end of World War II, the family and its members know well what is needed for the ceremony when someone dies. However, the nowadays situation is very different. The first thing they do is calling a funeral company to replace the role of kumi people who had disappeared. According to the research by Suzuku Hikaru (2000), there was a transition from funeral rituals performed by members of the communities (kumi) into commercial funeral rituals that were caused by modernization, urbanization, and commercialism in Japanese society. The development of the funeral industry is also affected by the history of kinship, social networking and other materialistic goals. Therefore the commercial funeral ceremony had an extremely rapid progress after the Industrial Revolution.

The most notable changes in this era were the amount of *sougisha* (funeral company) continues to increase. A decade after World War II ended, the industry of funeral ceremony was growing with the *Gojokai* help (mutual help groups). *Gojokai* firstly built by Nishimura Kamahiko in Yokosuga in 1948, under the name of Yokosuka-shi Kankon Sousai *Gojokai* (Help group for marriage and death ceremonies Yokosuka city). *Gojokai* took over the role of members of the community in the area on wedding and funeral ceremonies because of the bond between the community has been weakened. Nishimura saw a great business opportunity in wedding and funeral ceremonies. Most of the population experiencing economic hardship after the war and got into trouble to pay the expensive cost of the funeral ceremony. Therefore he made a system called *Seido Gojokai* system or helping with membership system, where a member free of monthly fees and can hold wedding or funeral ceremonies price range according to the type of membership. *Seido Gojokai* is growing rapidly among the lower classes in the cities. This made a lot of entrepreneurs who made the same system with the help of Nishimura. After a number of *Gojokai* growing more and more, *Zenkoku Kankon Sousai Gojokai Renmei* was founded (Association of groups helping in the wedding ceremony and the national funeral ceremony) in 1959. With this association, the quality and the number of companies engaged in the funeral industry with the *gojokai* system can be controlled , In addition, the association was also set standards for companies, so the entire office's funeral services offer similar prices for the services they provide. In development *gojokai* system that was originally intended for the urban underclass has grown to be serving the community and upscale middle class both in cities and in villages.

Although the *soogi* industry is growing rapidly, the view of the Japanese people toward funeral work is still regarded as *kegare* / dirty. Based on the view of the Japanese community there are several areas of work as much as possible avoided. The field involves work that is 3K namely; *kitanai* (gross), *kiken* (danger) and *kitsui* (hard). For example the work of butchers who slaughter animals, suction feces, cremation of corpses, the solemnization of death (*soogi*).

*Soogi* is a job that in the view of the Japanese as the dirty work because it directly relates to the corpse. While mortality or corpses in the view of the Shinto religion is considered as dirty, therefore, should be avoided. But ironically in Japan today funeral service business is a very profitable business. For example, in Hiroshima, a funeral services company implement the cemetery twice each contract value of 1.6 million yen will generate a profit of 1 million yen.

Similarly, what was stated by Yoshiharu Tomatsu (1995) of Taisho University Institute of Buddhist Studies Comprehensive Tokyo, that the funeral business would be a very large industry sectors and involve society extensive. According to Mitsubishi Research Institute, in 2020, the *soogi* business will become the biggest industry beyond the automobile sector and the dentistry service sector. Based on this research, the sector was estimated to have grossed over \$ 34 billion / year with an average of 1.7 million times funerals per year, where the cost of a standard funeral is \$ 20,000.

Meanwhile, from the investment side, the current interest rate on bank deposits in Japan close to 0 percent, which is 0.05% per year, so, to achieve a 7 percent rate of profit is very difficult. However, the *soogi* business provides a level of average net profit reached 30% from the cost of funerals.

According to research conducted by the Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry of Japan, about specific services industry (Heisei14), the number of entrepreneurs on *soogi* across the country was 4194, the total transaction reached to 626 290, sales figures were 780.7 billion yen. A wide variety of services companies were looking for opportunities to the field of *Soogi* because it was not required to obtain a permit and did not need to report to the government administration.

### 1.1.2. Funeral Ceremony

In the human life cycle known term birth, childhood, growing up, grow up, marry, enter old age, then died. Life chain is repeated from generation to the next. The most important events in the human life cycle are birth, marriage, and death.

Many researchers from various disciplines conducted research at every stage of the life. Research on the stage of birth has been done by experts, as well as research on marriage, but research on the stage of death still has not been done.

In general, people would avoid talking about death, because they instinctively reject the death befall on them. In many countries, such as Japan, the death considered as something dirty and should be avoided. This paper will discuss the death, not from the standpoint usual, namely that death is dirty and should be avoided, but quite the contrary, "death" is seen as a commodity to be "commercialized," bringing profit to be reckoned with.

The word of *soogi* is an acronym of *sougi sousougirei*. *Girei* or ritual connotes rite that makes gods and spirits or anything that is not visible as an object. In the rites of the funeral

ceremony, the spirit of the deceased is become an object. *Sousougirei* in the narrow meaning is a ritual for maintenance of the bodies of those who died and soothe his spirit. How the maintenance of the body called the *souhou*.<sup>19</sup> The death ritual is not finished just by taking care of the bodies, *sousougirei* become a ritual that starts with taking care of the bodies that will rot, part with the deceased and establish a new relationship with the deceased. The object of the new relationship is the spirit of the deceased who have loose or free from the bodies, called (*shirei*). Therefore, *sousougirei* in its broadest sense is a pattern of a series of actions against death.<sup>20</sup>

*Kokubetsushiki*, when viewed from a constituent of kanji have meaning *wakare wo tsugeru shikiten* or separation announcement ceremony. The object of *kokubetsushiki* is those related to the deceased, such as office mates, friends or colleagues.<sup>21</sup> In the *kokubetsushiki*, the family gives the opportunity to the guests to give their last respects to the deceased, also expressed gratitude when received help from the dead. The opposite is also providing the opportunity for the family to say thank you to people who have contributed or helped to the deceased.<sup>22</sup>

In Japan, death or "shi" is regarded as a state of the spirit or soul separate to *fafo* (*nikutai*) or the body.<sup>23</sup> Since ancient era, the Japanese believe that every human being has at least one spirit, and when the spirit left the body, the condition is called *kashi* or die while, whereas when the spirit leaves the body forever and not come back again, then the body called (*Shitai*), in other words, the person has died.<sup>24</sup> A ceremony to depart someone forever or the funeral ceremony called the *Soushiki* or also known as the release ceremony or dropping spirits or (*okuru gishiki*).<sup>25</sup> However, Japanese ancient or (*kodai Nihonjin*) believe that once a person dies, his spirit will continue to live in another world and at certain times would come to visit his family. This belief is still lagging in Japanese society until now.<sup>26</sup>

Funerals in Japan, there is one characteristic that is the rite was more concerned with taking care of the spirit rather than the body of the deceased.<sup>27</sup> This is in line with the concept of spirits or *retkonkan* in Japan who adore or worship of the spirits. The Japanese since ancient era believed although the bodies of the deceased have been lost, but his spirit remained and joined the ancestors who had already died and become a god (*kami*) who will keep them, so they held ceremonies of worship of ancestral spirits.<sup>28</sup>

Actually, what is commercialized in the industry of *soogi*? The service company organizing



the funeral ceremony just started its activities if there is a family of the deceased to use his services. So the object of his business is "death." Death comes from the word "die" in the Great Dictionary of Indonesian, death is defined as something that is lifeless. In Japanese dead called "shi" which means the separation between the living and the dead.<sup>29</sup> So in this sense contains two meanings for the death of a person, that are, the bodies and the abandonment (family bereavement).

Definition of death can be described from the view of medical science, the view of cultural science the view of social sciences. According to medical science, death is a cessation of all the biological activities. Meanwhile, in the view of cultural science, where religions are included, death was not only seen as the death of the organ of the body. Human as social beings that are bound by the need ritual that brought the dead to the next life. In the view of social science, a person's death is the separation between the deceased and the surrounding community, so it needs to be holding the farewell ceremony

In medical science there is a special field thanatology, the study of death and the changes that occurred after the death and the factors that influence those changes. There are three theories that describe death. The first theory says that the cessation of heartbeat indicate that the person is considered dead. The second theory says that a person is considered dead if breathing has stopped. Both theories are related to the failure of the biological functions. A third theory is different from the two previous theories. This theory involves the enlargement of the lens to determine the mortality. Magnification eyepiece is part of the mechanism of the brain. The brain is considered dead when the brain ceases the function. Dead brain (brainstem) is the irreversible damage to the entire contents of intracranial neuronal, including the brain stem and cerebellum. If the death of the brain (brain stem death) occurred, then the person as a whole shall be declared not alive, so that the medical tools can be terminated.

In the view of culture, death is the end of the stage of human life. Everyone who lives doomed to death. And no one can be sure when the occurrence of mortality. Uncertainty about the death has created fear in human beings. Because death will come upon every human being, then there are some efforts of humans to understand death itself, one of them with a religious approach<sup>30</sup>. As what was stated by Hajime Nakamura, that any religion in the world is always talking about death as well as teach about preparing life after death. Every religion has a ritual funeral as a farewell ceremony between the living and the dead as well as a ceremony to deliver the dead to the next life in the next world<sup>31</sup>.

Death is the separation between the die with the surrounding community, whether it's family, neighbors, friends or other community where the bodies interact during his lifetime. According to Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, a psychiatrist from Switzerland, there are five phases when a person is experiencing the grief of the death of a family member or close friend. The phases are shock, denial, anger, mourning and recovery.

The first phase is shocked, feel upset and could not believe the news is heard. The second phase is denial, feel that the death is a bad dream and not a reality. According to Kubler-Ross, the word 'pass away' is a word that softens the word of 'dead' as a result of a social culture that denies death. Phase anger is a phase that person not accept death and blame all those who cause it to happen. Tend to blame God (this is a natural reaction for people who acknowledge God Almighty), also blamed the situation and others such as doctors and medical teams, the absence of ambulances and the hospital that did not have adequate equipment to help , etc. Mourning, according to Kubler-Ross, the phase that lasts long enough, it could take in a few months or perhaps several years. Feelings of depression, guilt, loss, loneliness, panic and cry for no obvious trigger could be revealed in this phase; it can even manifest in mild physical illness. The last phase is the recovery; death can not be restored because the death had changed their lives forever and can not return the situation back as before. However, the pain of the death of a loved one will be reduced over time. Stages of recovery can be seen on the anniversary of the death as a release of pain and loss due to the death of loved ones<sup>32</sup>.

Three notions of "death" mentioned above, if viewed from the side of physical of the biology, in terms of culture, and in terms of socio-communal, it is shown that the meaning of death in the human life cycle is very "important." Death is the last link in human life, but a lot of people forget about it. People usually deliberately avoided when talking about death, but it is something that will surely face. But the contrary, the businessmen in the *soogi*, they capture the meaning of death and change it into business opportunities to replace Kumi society.

Many articles and publication about *soogi*, but usually authors discuss in terms of anthropology, science of religious and beliefs of society, sociology, psychology and philosophy. In general, anthropology research reveals that social and personal relationships,

values, and patterns / shapes cultural cohesion symbolically displayed on the death ritual. Research on the death ritual of the Japanese people typically focuses on ritual, mortuary, the process of achieving the ancestors and ancestor worship that clarify the cosmology of the Japanese people, and a significant association between life and death in the family system.

Hikaru in his dissertation discussed *soogi* in terms of anthropology, which focused on three themes: impurity and cosmology, ancestors and ancestral worship, and cemeteries and after death. While this research will discuss industrialization *soogi* in Japan in terms of the cultural aspects of society and the historical aspects of business development and management.

## 1.2. Research Question

The above description have driven to the questions which will solve through this research, such as:

- What changes happened to the Japanese people from the traditional community organizing funeral rituals become a commercial funeral services
- Why *soogi* companies in Japan flourished and why the *soogi* service users want to pay expensive cost of the funeral.
- How can “the needs” of mass consumption of these services will result in a homogeneous culture that does not rule out individual services.
- How marketing professional of funerals mediate in this culture change
- How does the company serves and repacking product packages based on funerals services with a deep understanding of the concept of death, the concept of the ritual of death and how to deal with the bodies.
- In the view of Japanese society that considers jobs in *soogi* was dirty (kitanai shigoto) and not prestigious, how businessmen of *soogi* catch this opportunity to become a commodity that brings big profits and packs it into a product package that is elegant in a modern way without leaving cultural values.
- How change happens to the *soogi* organization before World War II that were amateur to become a professional *soogi* after World War II
- How *soogi* industry's success in terms of functional change management, financial management, marketing, standardization of operations, as well as an increase in human resources

- How *soogi* industry's success in terms of

### 1.3. Analysis

To answer the questions above, the authors use the inter-disciplinary approach. This approach would involve theories of various disciplines that will solve the fundamental things. Disciplines that I use is the science of culture especially in Religious study and science of business management. The existence of inter disciplinary approach is expected to be able to provide a comprehensive overview to address the issues in this study.

#### 1.3.1. Religious Study approach

The cultural approach used the point of view that the funeral as physical activity, which is taking care of the body which in the view of the Japanese as *Kegare*. Meanwhile, a cemetery from the standpoint of the ritualistic ceremonies, from the religious point of Japan is a ritual dropping dead spirits to the life in the next world. Also in terms of social, death means the separation between the living and the dead, so it needs to hold a farewell ceremony.

“*Ie*” which is often interpreted as the family is actually a concept that is beyond the concept of the family itself, because in addition to the people who live in “*ie*”, the home, possessions and all sources of income that sustain the “*ie*”, as well as the tomb where the ancestral founder “*i.e.*,” buried also included in “*ie*”. Therefore “*i.e.*,” is a single spanning the period of time from the past to the present, and *i.e.*, occupy a certain position or be the basic unit in the village system in Japan. *Ie* is much more important than the individuals in the *i.e.*, and in other words, the personality of the person if necessary to be sacrificed for the sake of *i.e.*,<sup>33</sup>. *Ie* also reflected at the funeral of the Japanese, the ashes of the dead, can only be buried together with the family clan.

Before we analyze the funeral ceremony as a business, we should understand how Japanese people view the concept of death. This is essential due to the fact that the development of the funeral service business depends on the people’s viewpoint, and the adjusting of its service accordingly.

##### 1.3.1.1. People with Religious authority control the Fear of Death

The funeral service itself is the beginning of life after death, death in the Japanese belief was considered "dirty", so it needs to be purified. Purification is performed through funeral ceremonies. After those, every year on the anniversary of a person's death, a small ceremony is held, for safety and festivity, continuously for 33 years, at which time the deceased is believed to have become a god. A number of 33 is chosen because, after 33 years, there would be very few people who would still remember the deceased, so the deceased is thought to have become a god.

As for the knowledge about life after death in general, Japanese people do not know it very well, and they rely on the authority of the monks. So the monks are the one who holds control over the Japanese people's fears of death.

Several anthropologists such as James G Frazer, Edward Taylor, and Emile Durkheim analyzed funeral rituals to evaluate the progress of culture in the context of the development of revolutionary thinking. Their analysis focused on the fear of death. Before World War 2, Suzuki Hikaru illustrates that the fear of mortality came into dominance in the funeral ceremony as organized by the society of mutual cooperation. But after World War 2, the role of communities in the implementation of funeral ceremonies was taken over by the funeral company.<sup>1</sup> So that the control of the fear of death will be more dominantly held by *sogiya san*. This is a factor of why funerals are so expensive.

#### **1.3.1.2. Funeral Ceremony conducts a collective sentiment to become collective consciousness.**

Anthropologists such as Durkheim, Alfred Radcliffe-Brown dan Bronislaw Malinowski all agree that someone's death causes social solidarity to rise. According to Durkheim, funeral ritual is the unconscious reaction to the death of one of its "group" members, resulting in heartfelt sentiment and strong psychological feeling (Durkheim, 1965). In this shared sentiment, funerals are when mourners can begin gathering and relate cozy, sweet memories shared between each other and the deceased.<sup>2</sup>

The emotional atmosphere like this can happen only once, during a farewell ceremony with the deceased's beloved people. The community members and the close family members would mourn together, which results in the collective sentiment or "collective feeling".

<sup>1</sup> Suzuki Hikaru, Japanese Death Ritual in Transit: From Household Ancestors to Beloved Antecedents, Journal of Contemporary Religion, 1998

<sup>2</sup> E Durkheim, MS Cladis . 2001 : "[The Elementary Forms of Religious Life](#)". East West Centre Book, The University of Hawaii, Honolulu, Hawaii, 1982.ed. Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965

Within modern Japanese society, this role is played by *sougisha* companies. So in this situation, control over ceremonial atmosphere is held by the funeral company, including the cost of organizing the ceremonies.

In the emotional situations, sometimes a person is not dominated by common sense, but the feelings dominate all of the decision-making. I see in the movie *Oshoushiki* when the family of the deceased asked how much of the cost for *Obosan*. He answered without any expression on his face, even without opening his sunglasses, "10 Man yen or 20 man is OK". So the situation of emotion family of the deceased is controlled by the obosan family of the deceased. And the family of the deceased make own decision in the uncontrol emotion. Therefore, this is the reason there are many complaints from a client that the cost of the funeral is so expensive. But it is rarely today, because in the modern funeral company. Especially in the Internet Era, all information accessible, including information about the cost of obosan.

#### **1.3.1.3. *Kegare* and grief in funeral ritual**

Hikaru (2001) explained that the concept of impurity (*kegare*) appears when close family and friends, who mourn the deceased, are required to wash their feet with salt and water to rinse off the impurity. If the deceased excretes continuous waste, then the mourners are required to cleanse themselves by religious rituals (*harai*) by means of water, fire, and salt. When I did my fieldwork in Bellca a Funeral Company, I saw every mourner who came to the Bellca Funeral Hall; they received salt from the funeral hall before returning to their home. The salt which is packaged in paper sachets, size 5x4 cm. This salt is used to purify themselves before entering their house. (see figure 15).

The cleansing ritual is performed by rinsing oneself at the seaside, or, if performed at home, applying salt all over the body, and rinsing the body with water (Saito, 106-7). This ritual is also performed by mourners by washing their hands using water, then applying salt after finishing the cremation or funeral ceremony (Gorai 1992, 675; Saito, 100).

Aside from salt, fire is also considered as a "cleanser" for death impurities. This is apparent in the funeral by lighting up incense or candles (Saito, 167-68; Shintani 1992-65). Sake is also considered as having the power to prevent the impurities from adversely affecting the living. Some people drink sake before and after touching the deceased (Gorai, 1992, 712-99.342-44.1010). As can be seen from the funeral ritual manual published by Bellca Funeral Company, these cleansing rituals using either salt still performed even after the industrialization era.

As stated by Block (1981), "the ritual of funeral ceremony consists of two things: impurity aspect and grief aspect," both of these aspects used to be addressed by all members of the community in the past. In the modern age, these aspects are taken over by the *sougisha*. Judging from the complexity of the rituals, we could understand that it is very difficult for the *sougisha* to make sure that its clients get "happy endings". So it can be understood why the price of a funeral ceremony is so high.

#### **1.3.1.4. Ancestral Worship**

Ancestral worship has taken its roots in the family system to ensure the continuation of the family name or *myoji* (Akata 1986). In line with Akata; Iwayumi argues that family as the foundation and has responsibility for the worship of ancestors (Iwayumi, 2004). Usually, the ancestral worship is closely associated with the Japanese socio-religious aspect, which translates into dedication and continuation of the family system (*i.e.*), not only from the close, mourning family but also the bigger, extended family as a whole (Akata 1986, 1988; Hozumi; Ooms 1967, 1976; Takeda C. 1957, 1979; Tamamuro; Yanagita 1975a). This phenomenon is clearly apparent during a funeral ceremony during which the existence of a family name is displayed during incense lighting, which is performed by one who is closest in relation to the deceased. Lighting the incense (*sooko*) starts from *mosyu*, or the ritual leader (usually the wife or husband of the deceased), then is followed by the rest according to the rank of closeness to the deceased.

The ceremony of death comes from the concept of death being dirty or disgusting because the bodies are considered as a source of defilement and are believed to invite evil spirits due to the fear of graves in this life (Mogami, 1959, 1963). However, in the graves in Japan, the whole body is not buried; instead, only the ashes and bones of the body that were already cremated are buried. Therefore the Japanese cemetery is clean, beautiful, and good for the life or community because of the absence of the bodies that are dirty. From this understanding, it can be understood why the funeral service is very significant for ancestor worship. With regard to this, the experts argue the Japanese fear of ugly death as a reason for funerals, which can liberate the death of a dirty and ugly nature (Inoguchi, 1965, 190; Haga, 15; Mogami 1963, 170 Shintani, 1991, 232; Takeda C. 1957, 101).

As for the reason why the Japanese need to hold funerals, Suzuki Hikaru argued (in death rituals and Anthropology case 49) that the funeral ceremony is a ritual that emphasizes the view of the Japanese death and displaced spirits at the time of death who later become the

ancestors. In another opinion, Harada, for example, claimed that the funeral service was held with a view to strength the worship of the ancestors (Harada, 247-48). Takeda Choshu, furthermore, believed that the funeral was exclusively used as breeding for the souls of recently deceased, while the funeral ceremony was intended as worshipping the ancestors (Takeda C., 1957, 102-5).

If the bereaved family does not perform the funeral ceremony, the deceased are thought not to be able to become ancestors. It is another opportunity for the *sogiya* san to take care of the bodies in order to help them become ancestors.

The grave is the key for people to understand the views of the Japanese public on life after death. Dirtiness, ugliness, or pictures of death to the Japanese society and the changing into ancestral spirits, in the minds of the Japanese, is the life cycle of people. In the cosmology of Japan, *soogiyasan* pay homage to death so that the spirit of the deceased can be transformed from a good spirit into an ancestral spirit, and, by the end, the god of agriculture (Akata 1988; Matsudaira; Nakamura; Ohnuki-Tierney 1993; Yanagita 1975b; Orikuchi 1955a ; Takeda C. 1979; Smith, R. 1974). In addition, the spirit of the deceased is believed to be able to cause harm to the surrounding society, even to relatives left behind, if not taken care of properly. Therefore, rituals need to be performed in order to deliver the spirit to the next life. From this, it can be understood that the importance of the funeral ceremony is believed to accelerate the process of changing the spirit of the deceased into the spirit ancestor or ancestors.

According to the Japanese belief, the dead person will be a god after 49 days. Belief in ancestors who have died is such that, if the ancestor spirits are praised and given offerings, they will provide shelter to their offspring, but if they are not given offerings, they will cause harm [6] (Midori Katoni, 2001). Thirty to fifty years after a Japanese man dies, his spirit joined together with the whole family, and the spirit becomes a god (Matsudaira). It is considered that they would become a god / goddess of rice that secures the rice harvest and also maintain domestic harmony (Akata 1988; Nakamura; Ohkuni-Tierney; Yanagita 1975c: Orikuchi 1955a: Takeda C. 1979). However, the process does not stop here. A Goddess of rice is considered to salvage the harvest of rice (Ito, 50). Therefore, eating rice at funerals or other celebrations energize and rejuvenate gods in their lives, who would otherwise fall back into a dirty place "(54). Hence the flow of life and death is conserved through the worship of ancestors and consumption of rice. A funeral needs to be done because it is believed to accelerate the process of the transformation of the spirit of the dead in becoming gods who will regenerate life.



In the Japanese life system, religiousness is very evident with the burial ceremony of the deceased. For example, the belief is that death is the final episode, so parting with that life should be celebrated as best as possible.

### 1.3.2. Management and Business Approach

To answer the research question why the cost of funerals to be expensive, we need to see the component objects used in the funeral ritual. For instance, a pitcher that the normal price of 200 Yen, but when the pitcher is used for rituals can be changed the price to be 4-5 times the normal price. Then the question arises what the true meaning of things for people? From the standpoint of both traditional societies and modern societies this question can be answered in two ways, which is the subject of the study of material culture (cultural use of objects by men, how people relate to objects). First, objects can be placed in a functional perspective only. In this perspective a plate serves as food containers, weapons serves as a tool to hunt and defend themselves against enemy attacks, shoes serves as a foot protector (gaiters) and so on. The phenomenon of trade / economy is still included in this perspective. Second, objects can also be placed in the perspective as a totem, which is association - symbolically with something else. Here the objects act as a carrier of certain social meaning. Ring, for example, that do not matter in a functional perspective, the totem perspective can be meaningful of beauty, wealth, or a bond of loyalty and so on. These examples show that these objects, as theorized by Mary Douglas (anthropologist) and Baron Isherwood (economist) (1979)<sup>34</sup>, capable of concreting the abstract social meanings such as loyalty, obedience, etc.

According to Douglas and Isherwood, consumption of objects that occur in all societies was also outside the trade, it was always a cultural phenomenon, always concerned with the values, meanings, and communication. Objects not only used to do things but also have meaning and act as a mark of meaning in social relations, always exhibit a certain set of values. It also means that in the circulation of objects has been a symbolic exchange. Douglas and Isherwood specifically investigate the ceremonies, both in traditional and modern societies, which they said serves as a place for the creation of meaning of objects by showing the used in the ceremony. The ceremonies were a reference to the classification of a person in society; then the objects directly serve as a source of social identity and social meaning bearer.

Marshal Sahlins (1976) developed the concept of totemism to investigate the consumption of objects in modern society. According to him, the traditional communities use 'natural' objects (wood, stone, bone and so on.) as a totem, but the totem of modern society is

a factory-made object. He showed that the modern society clothing system was not just a set of material objects to create a warm body etc., but as a symbolic code to communicate membership in a social group (man and woman, low and high class etc.). Through modern society, clothing communicates female elegance, male strength and subtly aristocratic class<sup>35</sup>.

McCracken (1988) also identified consumer use of objects in rituals in contemporary society<sup>36</sup>. He described a few of the most important rituals of contemporary society. First is the 'blessing ceremony,' which involves collecting, cleaning, comparison, and exhibition of the objects. Decorating a bedroom with posters. This ceremony allows the owner to claim rights to the meaning of an object outside of the usual ownership limits. It's a way to personalize an object, how to move the meaning of the individual world to the newly acquired objects. He pointed out the prize ceremony, for example, on birthdays, Christmas or Valentines Day. Selection and provision of consumer objects by person and given to someone else was a displacement of meaning. Often an object selected as gifts because they will have the meaning of full of ownership to be given to others. For example, a woman who receives an outfit invited to define itself according to the meaning of his style; giving flowers or chocolates may ask the recipient to indicate the nature or properties of sweet tenderness. From this perspective, giving objects at a ceremony (birthdays, feast, etc.) can be considered as the most appropriate means of interpersonal communication or interpersonal influence<sup>37</sup>. In line with this example, the cup used in a Shinto shrine, or folds that are sold in the stores at Jinja in Japan, everything was economically very precious compare with the actual price of the object.

Material culture, in Marx's view, is the objectification of social consciousness. It originated from Marx's distinction between the production that gives direct benefit to the manufacturer with production solely for the benefit of the market. The latter process is called "objects as commodities". Though they did not experience the cultural forms of modern materials, he then came to the concept of commodity fetishism which describes the concealment of stories about who and how an object is created<sup>38</sup>. In modern fetishism, usability of objects is systematically distorted by the pursuit of capitalist profit. And it is clear that the need to make a profit has been dramatically spawned new objects were sold only to manipulate consumers.

Theodore W. Adorno (1974), interpreter of Marx, introducing the concept of secondary value. This concept showed the phenomenon of consumption in industrial societies where, through packaging, promotions and advertising, objects were matched with masks

designed expressly for manipulating the possible link between objects on the one hand and pretensions, needs and emotions of human beings on the other side, Secondary value runs when the dominance of the exchange rate has been set to erase the memory of pure value of the objects. This is the basis for the aesthetic commodity, where commodities play a free role in the association and the illusion of a very broad culture. Further Adorno highlight very sharply about commoditization, that in the hands of the power of capitalism, all become commodities on behalf of the exchange rate, even including the religion.

Arjun Appadurai (1986)<sup>39</sup> upgraded Douglas and Isherwood's methodology by directly focusing his studies on 'social objects.' He stated that the objects are not just a social and culture alone, but these things have a life: the weight and authority of objects can be imposed on human life, because it has the power to affect confidence, giving obligations, performance, and pleasure. Although from a theoretical view, men as the actors marking objects with meaning, but from the point of methodology, the movement of the objects embellish the social context and their humanity. In somewhat of a surprise, objects were reviewed narratively, spoken as a story by means of 'life history.' In short he traced the narrative objects and tracked its trajectory: from which the objects came from, who made it, what's the point, how many 'aged' or 'periods of life' of the object, what's characteristics of the culture of it, how usefulness of things change according to age and so on. A good example of the approach of the Appadurai's model is the production of highly customized Harley Davidson, where every buyer of motor HD feel special because each motor HD has certain special characteristics and are not the same for each product. So that buyer is willing to pay expensive, because of there the secondary value of the motor.

From such material cultural concepts above, is expected to help answer research questions, why the package price *soogi* be very costly if viewed from the perspective of parties who are not involved in emotional situations of the bereaved family.

#### 1.4. Research objectives

1. To analyze comprehensively changes that occur in the *soogi* organization before World War II that are amateur to the professional *soogi* in the aftermath of World War II and to study from the perspective of culture and business management, why the *soogi* industry is growing very rapid especially after World War II.

2. To study the *soogi* organizer's success to change the *soogi* become a very profitable business from the view of the Japanese people who perceive that *soogi* work was dirty and not prestigious.
3. From the observation at a service company in Japan with a market entirely Japanese society, it is expected to better understand the social culture and the culture of the Japanese company in its natural environment in Japan
4. To observe directly how the culture of Japanese companies engaged in services in general and the *soogi* companies in particular, from the point of view of both functional management and strategic management
5. From the academic side, it is expected to give an idea of the typical Japanese style of management where the case of funeral industry as an example.

## 1.5. Research Significance

### 1.5.1. Theoretical

In the process of commercialization of death, there are two sides to consider, first is the management side of the business concerning physical activity and the second is cultural side concerning the sacred values and society. Physically death can be viewed as any other commodity, so the commercialization of death could follow the laws and business management. But death can not be regarded merely as a commodity; there are cultural values which were very dominant, especially in the pricing of their services.

Theories for this view that the Japanese people as a rational society must be questionable significance in Japanese society today. Because when people in Japan use the *soogi* services, no longer rational use completely, even cultural considerations are more dominant, for example, *soogi* is considered as a way to honor family members who died, so "sitsurei" (taboo) when to go bargain price packages offered, though when judging from outside parties who are not mourning it was very expensive.

Hence the key to success of this *soogi* business is "a pervasive understanding of culture as the key to success in the commercialization of Death."

The package price of *soogi* is high due to the weight and authority of the objects for ceremonial tools.

### 1.5.2. The practical implications

By knowing the reasons why the Japanese people are willing to pay dearly for a death ceremony, it will be able to broaden the knowledge of Japanese culture, which is very necessary to know the character of the Japanese people, especially in the business and diplomatic relations with them.

As well as Indonesia, Japan used to be an agricultural country, but for the development of highly advanced manufacturing industry, Japan is now shifting to industrial countries. What to be learned from the Japanese experience is how the development of the service industry in Japan in line with the rapid manufacturing industry. How do the Japanese people anticipating this development, if there is a shift in culture values? How product modification services still justified within the limits of cultural value which should be maintained.

Circumstances as experienced by the Japanese society are now also experienced by the people of Indonesia who slowly began to move toward the industrial society. So it is necessary to study this case, in order to anticipate future needs.

The results of this study are expected to provide a view to eliminating psychological barriers of investors in Indonesia to enter into the field of business of cemetery. To date, the investors are still reluctant to get into this business even though the results of analysis of the industry, especially in terms of demand was very nice as well as on the side of benefits is very high (30%).

The results of this study are also expected to be meaningful for decision makers, players in the funeral business and other related parties. Especially the change in addressing the existence of the funeral business, if the business is managed professionally.

In addition, this study is expected to provide input to the policy holders related to the funeral business in Indonesia to improve the cemetery management which has been impressed chaotic and unprofessional. This can be seen by the number of extortion in the cemetery; the charge soared 20 times compared to the official rates. The problem of limited land for graves in Indonesia also indicate the indifference of the government on public facilities.

Funeral facilities in major cities today are already scarce. For instance, Jakarta, According to the Office of the Capital City Funeral Service, demand for space of cemetery until 2005 reached to 785 hectares, while the Jakarta Spatial Plan 2010 only provides 745.18 hectares (2010), then in the next few years Jakarta will experience a land crisis and the threat of rejection burial ground for migrants. Currently, the remaining land is 60.62 hectares or 602,000 square meters. Assuming every corpse requires an area of 6 square meters (including infrastructure) means only 101 033 people could be buried in Jakarta. (Kompas 12/7 2006). If an average of about 100 to 110 people died and was buried in Park Cemetery in Jakarta, according to Head of Jakarta Funeral Service, Dadang Kadarusman, the area burial grounds can only meet the needs of about three years or only until November 2009. ■

It is also experienced by major cities in Indonesia such as Surabaya, Medan, Semarang, Bandung. Even the cemetery land crisis is also starting in a small town like Cimahi. In District, Central Cimahi declared graveyard had been exhausted. Therefore, people who died could not find the space for the funeral. While North and South Cimahi still leave about 20% of the land area cemetery from the previous (People's Daily Thoughts, November 6, 2006).

By studying the funeral management in Japan, it is expected to take the lessons that might be applicable in Indonesia, so the funeral as the needs of people who have been forgotten can be neat and far from being austere and forbidding.

This paper is expected to contribute ideas to society to realize that it should pay attention to everything about the deaths as the other necessities of life, so it is expected to prepare themselves the afterlife.

For Indonesian businessman, it would increase knowledge, that the investment in this area is very interesting, especially for the period after the fall of President Soeharto at which time there is legislation that restricts ethnic Chinese to express their culture. Now the law has been repealed, so that it can provide a fresh climate for investment in the cemetery, especially for Chinese ethnic.

## II. History of Funeral Ceremony Business

According to Hikaru (2000), the funeral ceremony could be divided into two groups: before World War II and after World War II. Before WWII, funeral ceremony, commonly referred to as “*Kumi*,” is performed by local communities. Meanwhile, after WWII, the funeral ceremony could be considered as commercialized *sougi*, in which all of the procedures are taken over by the professional funeral company.

### 2.1. Funeral Ceremony before World War II

Before World War II, if there is any member of the community dies, the whole community would gather and cooperatively prepare funeral ceremony. The preparations include calling the monk, publishing mortuary, procuring the materials used for the rituals, ordering a coffin, and preparing souvenirs for mourners.

Communal funeral ritual, which was ubiquitous during Showa era (1925-1989) consists of four stages: 1) resuscitation ceremony, *sosho* or *sosei*; 2) rope-cutting ceremony, *zetsuen*; 3) ascension to Buddha ceremony, *jobutsu*; 4) memorial service, *tsuizen*. (Akata, 1980, 125-45; 1986, 35-120).

*Sosho* ritual is performed to “resuscitate” the body of the deceased by calling back the soul (*tamashii*), in which the “soul” has left already, to the original body. After “realizing” that the resuscitation does not work, the ritual proceeds to *zetsuen*. In *zetsuen*, cutting the rope symbolically expresses that the soul is now “released” safely in order to go to the next world. The next ritual, *jobutsu*, helps the soul ascending to Buddha. The last one, *tsuizen*, is a kind of mini-festival to help the soul transforms into the ancestral spirit that guards the family house.

The four rituals are based on the cosmological belief of Japanese people that states that the spirits of the dead will still be around even though they have separated from their respective bodies (Akata 1986, 35-75). However, those spirits could become hostile if they are not maintained well by the living (Goral 1992, 731). In this case, the traditional graveyard serves two intertwined purposes: 1) to keep the spirit in the next world; 2) to guard the living against hostile spirits. The graveyard community is working together to avoid impurity (*kegare*) and pollution (*fujō*) of death.

The resuscitation ceremony is performed when the person is still dying (but not yet died). The family member who is sitting the closest to the person would bring a chopstick-sized bamboo stick, put cotton on one of its ends, put the cotton into the water, and

wipe the person's mouth with watered cotton. Sometimes the stick is replaced by feather, but the procedure is still the same. The purpose of this ritual is to give water to the dying person as a last resort to resuscitate him/her back to life. At the very last moment, the family members would call the name of the dying person (*tama-yobi*). This ritual expresses the belief regarding the existence of the soul, and the separation of the soul from the body as the fine line between life and death.

The community members would call in a doctor only if the family is certain of the coming death of one of its members. The doctor's role is just for scientifically pronouncing the death, to explain the death, and (the most important part) to prepare death certificate in order for the family to order a grave spot to local government.

After the supposed resuscitation effort is deemed a failure, then the family members would close the eyes and fold the hands (to assume a praying/*gassho* stance) of the deceased. The face of the deceased is arranged to face upward or west and then covered with white cloth. Next, the position of the bed is moved in order for the face to face north. A razor (*kamisori*) is placed next to the bed. A small table (*kyozukue*) is placed in front of the body, and the family members would arrange a bowl of rice (*makurameshi* or *oppa*) with standing chopsticks put on top of it, a plate of rice ball cakes (*dango*), a glass of water "of death" (*shinimizu*), a candle, and an incense. Goral noted that the rice and *dango* are served to light up the spirit of the deceased (Goral 1992, 743).

Death is closely associated with "dark shadow" (*kurobi gakari*) or dark pollution (*koku fujo*). These are considered dangerous not only for the living but also for the gods. To warn the neighbors of this danger, the family would make a "mourning" sign (*ki-chu* or *mo-chu*) and put it on its home fence. They would also cover their altar (*kamidana*) with white paper to protect the gods from the danger of death. In Saruhami, Nuki, Ohna, Ideura, and Michihara, a folded fan (*sensu*) is placed to protect the altar.

The cooperation among community members (*kumi* or *kogumi*) consisting of 5-7 families is responsible for preparing and performing rituals for the deceased. The activity of funeral rituals is prepared just as perfect as harvesting rice, building a house, repairing the roof, preparing for a wedding, and others (Hikaru, 47). After a doctor is formally pronouncing the death, a family member would select the head of the funeral committee. The committee head (*kumi-cho*), a role prepared to take over the head of the house from preparing for *kumi*, is responsible for calling-in a monk, informing relatives of the deceased, and buying necessary materials for the funeral (including decorations for ritual ornaments and foods for before and after the ritual). The foods also include various kinds of tofu (bean extract) which



are needed for snacks. All the meals prepared are free from meat, because by eating only vegetables (albeit temporarily) would purify them from the impurity caused by the death (Goral 1992, 859-62). Lastly, the committee head would also order coffin from local craftsman.

In the night of the guard, *kumi-cho* is gathering male *kumi* members to discuss the necessary tasks and their deadlines. The tasks include digging the grave (the most crucial), preparing funeral flowers (*shikabana* or *shikanohana*), *ihai* for funeral flowers, and dragon ornaments (*tatsuguchi* or *tatsugashira*), a coffin (*akoya* or *tengai*), and six long candles (*hi* or *kosho*). Most of the things above are prepared by hand, and then would be left in the grave or burned after the ceremony. Lastly, the men arrange the funeral altar to put the materials brought from the temple, which would be used by the monk in the ceremony.

The deceased body is lied down on the bed until the monk comes and chants *sutra* for him (*makura-gyo*). When the monk is finished chanting the *sutra* and the sun sets in, they perform the bathing ceremony for the deceased (*yukan*). They cut the deceased's hair (as a sign that he/she is a pupil of Buddha) and cut his/her nails. After *yukan* is finished, they put on a white robe on the deceased body that symbolizes death, consisting of: triangle head cover (*zokin*), gloves (*tekko*), a robe (*kyo-katabira*), foot cover, and Japanese socks (*shiro-tabi*). All of the components are for the preparation for the deceased to ascent to Buddha. There are a strict rule and procedure to be followed in making the white robe. For example, they tear the cloth instead of cutting them with scissors; sew the seam so that the sewn parts are clearly shown, no knot at the end of the yarn, no collar, etc. The fabric of the cloth itself is special and not being used for any other purpose, so as to emphasize the difference between life and death (Matsudaira, 189).

Next, the *kumi* members build a funeral altar from woods in order to be placed in front of the coffin. On top of the altar, they put incense pot, foods, and a chrysanthemum flower vase. Meanwhile, the family members bring out the kimonos of the deceased, and hang them on a bamboo log, facing north. This *zitsuen* ritual continues to seven days. After that, the kimono is flushed by water, and is let hanging for seven nights. The kimono represents the deceased crossing Sanzu river (*Sanzu no kawa*) in the north, i.e. the river that separates between the living and the dead. The kimono is brought down on the 8<sup>th</sup> day to represent the deceased having crossed the river safely and have separated him/herself from the living world.

Families, relatives, friends, and neighbors are gathering in the deceased home until late at night, in which the monk chants *sutra*. After the monk finished chanting, the mourners

light the incense one by one, which would stay lit until the next morning. Next, the ladies help prepare tea and sugar. The monk himself would stay for the night at the deceased home, to chat with the families, relatives, and friends of the deceased about the deceased. Usually the ladies go home early, while the men stay until late night, drinking sake and chatting. It is common for the bereaved family not to sleep at this night. They keep the incense and candles to make sure that they are still lit, so that the deceased body is protected from an evil spirit (Saito, 50-54). The committee head distributes the tasks to the men in *kumi*, and the tasks for their wives are to cook vegetarian snacks (*otoki*). The ladies have to be able to decide who cooks what snack, because in the end they have to prepare five to seven different types of snacks. The snacks are served in bowls and plates, and it is the duty of the ladies to wash those dishes before and after eating. Since there is a rule that prohibits the mourning family to cook in their home, the foods are prepared in neighbor's home. This is where the ladies gather, prepare foods, and wash dishes to be used the next day.

On the day of the funeral, the closest members of the family wear white robes (*shiro-moku*) with Japanese traditional white socks (*shiro-tabi*), and traditional sandals with white ropes (*shiro-hanao*). The ladies tie their hair and wear white hats (*wata-boshi*). Meanwhile, other relatives and neighbors wear black kimono. This difference in funeral suit represents the closeness of the wearer to the deceased.

On the afternoon, families and relatives eat their supper (still vegetarian-based meals) in front of the coffin. The dinner would be the last time they eat their meals with the deceased, so it is commonly known as “departure meal” (*detachi no zen*). All the family members drink sake to purify themselves from the impurity caused by death.

Meanwhile, two of the neighbors stand in front of the deceased home's door, to welcome the guest as well as to supervise the charity giving or funeral donation. Funeral donation is considered to be very important, because of the fact that the members of the community should repay whatever kindness they receive from other members, all for the sake of unity in the community. This kind of cooperation is called reciprocal relationship (the repayment culture).

The funeral usually starts on the afternoon when the monk comes. Rich families usually call in two or three monks at the same time. The monk sits in front of the coffin, and the other mourners (family members, relatives, friends, neighbors, etc.) sit behind the monk. The funeral ritual starts by chanting of sutra by the monk, which is followed by the mourners, and the mourners light up incense one by one. Next, the coffin is opened to give the mourners the last look on the deceased, and also to put several things in the coffin, such as: foods

(riceballs and sweets), yarn and needle (if the deceased is female) or razor (if the deceased is male), coin (*rokumonsen*), and other belongings of the deceased. Those things are supposed to be used by the deceased on his way to the next world.

Next, family members close the coffin using a rock as a hammer and some nails. The nails are supposed to keep the world of the living apart from the world of the dead. The elder of the bereaved family is the first to nail the coffin, followed by other close family members, all the way to far relatives. Right after the coffin is taken out from the house, the rice bowl that was put on the altar is thrown to the floor. Next, the *zetsuen* (rope-cutting) ceremony is performed in order to prevent the spirit of the deceased from going back home.

All *kumi* members, except the elderly and handicapped ones, walk the coffin to the graveyard. Two *kumi* members walk first to lay down candles along the way. The ceremony is led by a man from *kumi*, followed by family members, relatives, friends, and then the ladies from *kumi*. The order of the line is as follows: 1) a *kumi* member brings a torch; 2) another *kumi* member brings half-pole flag; 3) other two *kumi* members bring bamboo dragon; 4) the monk; 5) the utmost elder from the bereaved family brings papers; 6) other elders bring funeral flowers; 7) family members and relatives; 8) a *kumi* member brings covering cloth for the coffin; 9) two *kumi* members bring the coffin; 10) and finally, friends, neighbors, and ladies from *kumi*.

A long cloth is tied down around the coffin, while the rest is left hanging behind the coffin. This leftover would be cut at the end of the ceremony and then stored. In rich families, they usually bring a bucket of sweets to be distributed to children along the way. This is believed to be the same as feeding hungry spirits so that they don't disturb the ceremony.

When the group finally reaches the graveyard, the coffin is rotated clockwise three times and then be brought down to the hole using four ropes. After the coffin is in the grave, the most elderly of the bereaved family is the first in line to put the soil back to the hole to cover the coffin. He is followed by other family members, and then the relatives as well. After a person finished shoveling some amount of soil into the grave, he puts the shovel (*kuwa*) in front of the next person in line. This is a part of the *zetsuen* ritual. Finally, the bereaved family leaves their sandals at the graveyard, and then leaves the grave altogether. Other *kumi* members are responsible for finishing the grave hole by filling it with soil until it is perfectly covered. Next, they also go home without ever turning back to the grave. When they reach their own homes, before entering the house, they put salt in their clothes, then wash their hands with salt. All these cleansing rituals are for the sake of cleaning the impurity that comes with death.

Meanwhile, the three people who dug the grave put the coffin into the grave. They fill the hole with soil and make a mound. Funeral flowers and the papers are put on top of the grave. After the funeral is over, all community members are waiting for dinner (*hone-kami*, or “bone-biting”) until the three people come home from the grave. The men from *kumi* eat first, followed by women, and then children. At the end of the meal, foods and sweets are distributed among *kumi* members.

The mourning period is 49 days (*shijukunichi*) after the death. After this amount of time passes, the spirit is expected to reach the next life. The bereaved family invites the monk again to chant some *sutra* on 7<sup>th</sup> (*shonnoka*) and 49<sup>th</sup> day (KEC 1988, 56). The ceremony for ascension to Buddha and memorial service is performed in the form of monks chanting *sutra* and bereaved family praying for the deceased. Ascension to Buddha ceremony is performed from the day of funeral until the 77<sup>th</sup> day (*nanaju nanaki*) in the form of praying at the altar. Memorial services are performed on several occasions, i.e. death festival (*obon*), new year (*shogatsu*), partial day and night festival (*higan*), monthly death memorial (*gakki*), periodical memorial (*nenki*), and at the final memorial (*tomurai-age*) by inviting a monk to chant *sutra* (Akata 1986, 89).

The Japanese ritual for a funeral is unique in the sense that it has some effort to integrate the soul/spirit to the living world, and then to release it for a journey to the next world. Second, the process of integration of spirit to ancestral spirit takes time, done in stages, and need formal rituals. Memorial service (*tsuizen*) has to be performed in accordance to rule up to the end of the ceremony (*tomurai-age*). The ceremony is performed on 33<sup>rd</sup> and 55<sup>th</sup> day after death, during which period the spirit is expected to have successfully become ancestor and a Buddha.

## 2.2. The history of funeral industry

The transformation from death ritual to funeral is closely related to modernization, urbanization, and commercialization in Japanese community. The development of funeral industry is also affected by history of relatives, social networking, and material object.

In Edo era (1600-1867), the Buddhism death ritual was perfected under pressure from parochial system brought on by Tokugawa regime in 1640 (Smith 1974, 20-21). To anticipate the rising christianization, the regime ordered all immigrants to join Buddhist temple. This gave advantage to Buddhist monks to rise among the community members as leaders. They were responsible for birth, marriage, divorce, and death registrations (Kitagawa, 212). The

order was not only helping the death rituals of Buddhist believers to integrate, but also connected the monks to individuals in the families in a community. Some of the responsibilities included calming vengeful spirits, avoiding impurity from death, maintaining relationship with ancestral spirits, and calming the families through rituals.

When Meiji government erased the stratification of warriors, farmers, artists, and merchants (*shi-no-ko-sho*), lower classes tried to mimic the funeral culture of the aristocrats (Inoue S. 1990, 76, 79). The funeral of rich families during Meiji era was characterized by ornaments that were being used (78-79). For example, they put big flower vases (both real and artificial ones) along with cages with pigeons or xxxx inside. Moreover, there was a wagon filled with sweets (*kuyo-gashi* or *hikidemono*) which was present during funeral procedure (67-69; Murakami 1991, 76). When the group arrived at the temple, the birds were released (*hocho*) as one of the entertainments, and the sweets were distributed to the people who were watching to show off the family's wealth. In his book *Roadside Stone (Robo no ishi)*, Yamamoto Yuzo explains that poor ladies in the era sometimes made a fool of themselves by joining the funeral group just for the sake of collecting sweets and other gifts (Yamamoto, 304-10). These phenomenons were common during big funerals in Meiji (Inoue S. 67-70).

The aristocrats usually used horizontal coffins (*shinkan*) and stretcher (*koshi*) to move the body. However, this changed to vertical coffins (*zakan*), carried by another kind of stretcher (*kago*) which was commonly used by farmers (79). The importance of a coffin was not as simple as its appearance, but it was actually bound by certain complicated rules. Funerals for rich people started with fishermen's parade (*yakko no gyoretsu*), mimicking the parades of the feudal lords (*daimyo*) during Edo era. In this parade, the entertainers were trained to perform their jobs using umbrella, warrior's storage box, flag, and spear (95-101). The mimicry of aristocrat funerals, which were referred to by Inoue Shoichi (81-89) as "spectacular funerals", was one of the ways for the rich family to show off their influence, wealth, and social status.

The tendency of performing spectacular funerals encouraged the uprising of local graveyard rentals. Tokyo Funeral Parlor (Tokyo Sogisha) in 1887 was one of the first to rise (91). The news about such phenomenon was written in a newspaper:

"Latey, a businessman couple established Tokyo Funeral Parlor in Kanda. This rental has complete ornaments for both Buddhist and Shinto-style funerals at certain prices. Three days ago, the rental opened a new branch in Nihonbashi in order to fix unprofitable small stores" (Mori S. 1969, 132).

The article somehow showed that the original purpose of graveyard rental establishment are for supplying ornaments needed for funeral ceremonies and for transporting the deceased bodies. Most rentals provided stretchers, coffins, cooper (*okeya*), crafts, and decorations (Inoue S. 91; Sogi 1991, 87; Sogi 1993a, 86; Sogi 1993b, 81). The craftsmen who possess skills to make funeral ornaments changed their profession in order to earn higher income. For example, Ichianagi-Sogu-Sohonten, one of the first funeral rental places to open in Nagoya in 1877, was founded by a craftsman who left his village to Nagoya to open funeral ornament rental (Sogi 1991, 86-89). At the beginning of his career, he made decorations, and then he recruited parade performers, funeral organizers, and body transporters (87-88). Nakamura-gumi, founded in Kita-kyushu in 1896, was started from a cooperation (*benriya*) company which sent coffins and funeral ornaments to homes of the deceased. A couple decades later, the cooperation transformed into Nakamura-gumi Funeral Rental (Nakamura-gumi Sogisha) by adding funeral ornament rental and transportation for the deceased body to the graveyard.

Funeral rituals in Taisho era were not as spectacular as in Meiji, in which the rich family stopped the tradition of showing off in broad daylight. During this time, the rituals were performed in the night; or with no ritual at all (Inoue S., 109). Inoue suggested three reasons behind the transformation: 1) transportation system development; 2) distance from house to cremation site; and 3) changing rationalization of funeral for people in high class communities (114-30). Rickshaw (*jinrikisha*), stage (*norai-basha*), and chariot (*tetsudo-basha*) flew into city streets, and perhaps as parts of a funeral ritual, they walked with pride. Cremation was introduced in that era to avoid the possibility of infection from the deceased body (Asaka and Yagisawa, 58).

More importantly, the change in funeral rituals was influenced by Taisho democracy and introduction of western rationalization. The state of funeral rituals at the time was heavily influenced by Sakai Toshihiko, a socialist intellectual who described the ritual as: "I don't believe that the ritual is for the sake of traditional purity of the spirit. Most of the funerals in this era are almost based on wrong and excessive thinking... somebody with pride should not let himself being insulted like that. The community is also not supposed to allow the deceased to be taken on the street" (Sakai, 314).

In the middle of all modernization that was happening in Japan, the complicated funeral rituals started to fade. The rituals were performed in a simpler way, with only farewell ceremony (*kokubetsu-shiki*) (Murakami 1992b, 104). The main focus of farewell notes was the memories with the deceased, and was delivered in speech by one of the audience. The

farewell ceremony was performed as a consequence of urban community who tend to live far from temple (Murakami 1991b, 106). People who moved to big cities tend to lose their ties with temples in their hometown, and since the end of Edo era (1987), they no longer needed regulation to join the nearest temple in the place where they lived.

The first funeral in a city that utilized a hearse occurred in the beginning of Showa era. Hearse was introduced to Japan in 1917 (sixth year of Taisho); owned by Gayu, one of the oldest funeral rentals in Osaka (Inoue S., 132). In 1992, Ichiyagi Wholesale Funeral Ornaments (Ichiyagi-sogu-sohonten) imported a hearse from the U.S. (was named “Vim”) (Sogi 1991, 88). Nakamura-gumi Sogisha, the oldest funeral rental company in Kita-Kyushu, also imported a hearse in 1931. Kakuda, one of the most important advisors to the company president, told me that his father, a funeral rental founder, was the first civilian to earn automobile license (ownership license) in Kita-Kyushu. In the beginning of Showa (late 1920s), hearses became an essential component in local funerals due to the long distance between residential houses to the cremation site (Inoue S., 135). The adoption of hearses came from the west, along with the development of western rationalization of local communities (133-34). The decorations of luxury hearses were catchy and unforgettable. Some hearses were decorated as mini-temple, with dragons, phoenixes, lanterns, and other golden ornaments. The outer appearance gave us the impression of luxurious Meiji rituals; however in reality, not only the impression, but also the ornaments that were previously used during Meiji era were actually being used in the hearses (147-49).

The founding of Japanese hearses and fading away of rituals reduced the need for funeral objects, funeral labors, and in consequence, the number of funeral rentals. The importance funeral rentals kept fading away during World War II, when most families in Japan could no longer show off in the funerals (Murakami 1992b, 104).

The wave of graveyard rental would be suitable in modern times where the rich people tend to mimic aristocrats’ funeral style to increase their social values. The development of graveyard rental was also influenced by urbanization. The adverse point of big cities is that the communities are separated from one another, which actually makes graveyard rental a reasonable choice due to the fact that the people in the cities don’t know each other very well.

Entering post-war period, funeral industry started to shine thanks to the assistance from Mutual Aid Cooperatives (*Gojokai*). Funeral and marriage of Mutual Aid Cooperatives were founded in Yokosuga in 1948 by Nishimura Kamahiko (Zenkoku Knakon Sosa Gojokai Renmei 1974, 34). The name of the company was Yokosuga City Wedding and Funeral Mutual Aid Cooperative (Yokosugashi Kankon Sosai Gojokai). This began from his desire to

take over funeral rules which started to fade in the community. Next, Nishimura expected a profitable business opportunity in wedding and funeral. Most Japanese face economic difficulty after the war, which make it harder for them to pay for luxurious spending such as wedding and funeral. He built his business based on a management principle called mutual aid system (*gojokai seido*), which serves as the backbone of most funerals and weddings these days (Edwards, 42-43). Mutual-aid cooperative relies on its members' deposit, in which each member (*gojokai kaiin*) has to pay starting from the time they fill out the application form. In this cooperative, there were two different plans that were offered: 1) members pay 20 yen each month for 10 years (2,400 yen); or 2) members pay 18 yen each month for 10 years (2,160 yen) (Zenkoku Kankon Sosai Gojokai Renmei 1974, 37). After making payments for six months, members were able to choose between the two plans, both for wedding and funeral. Then they could continue their payment on installment even after the ceremony had been performed. However, if the member wished to perform the ceremony in less than six months after he/she signed up, then he/she had to pay the remaining deposit.

Mutual Aid System (MAS) grew significantly among low class urban communities. Entrepreneurs who realized this profitable opportunity attempted to learn from Nishimura, who were willing to share to everyone about his management principle. Next, The National Association of Wedding and Funeral Cooperatives (*Zenkoku Kankon Sosai Gojokai Renmei / ZGR*) was established in 1959. ZGR was managed by companies who adopted Nishimura's business model. In order to establish such companies, one needed to hold a particular license which was supervised by the management of Mutual Aid System (MAS) (ZGR 1974, 159-60). In this case, ZGR was not only controlled by the mutual aid system but also by the member companies.

Between 1976 and 1982, under supervision from MAS, the funeral industry reached its peak. In 1973, there were 347 member companies of ZGR, with 4,267,000 total members. This wave of success was enjoyed by ZGR which held a business license in 1973, which was brought by the president of Moon Rise Inc, Sakuma. He discussed this matter with Nakasone, the Secretary of International Trade and Industry, and established the motion that this movement would serve as a critic on the integration of political and economic status of funeral companies. The Ministry encouraged the members to cooperate more and each company to secure insurance policy from banks or Mutual-Aid Association Insurance Corporation (ZGR 1974, 59). These requirements had to be met by funeral companies in order to increase their position in the world of business.



What can we learn from the success of funeral companies these days? Advisor to Nakamura-gumi graveyard rental provided the answer, i.e. “Even though funeral profession has not been the highest, but we have to admit that our existence in this business significantly owes to the help from Mutual-Aid system and its members. Most graveyard rentals such as Nakamura-gumi offer a wide range of services and transform themselves into funeral companies. Although they are not joining the Mutual Aid Association, they have been offering similar services. The integration of those companies involves three essential elements: taking care of the deceased body, standardization of the plans and programs, and a range of funeral services. By specializing in these tasks, and with existing knowledge of the rituals, funeral companies could become a professional business.

Before and after World War II, the services of funeral companies were focused on procuring the equipment to be used in the funeral, including delivery of coffin and ornaments to the deceased’ house, transporting the body to the temple, graveyard, or crematorium (Bestor, 199). In any way, Mutual-Aid cooperative and professional funeral companies were to take over the funeral responsibility which was previously born by family members. MAC was liberating the mourning family from the duty of taking care of the body since after the death.

Standardization of programs is an essential point in MAS. All funeral companies are offering pre-programs at similar costs. For example, in 1967 Moon Rise (the first member of the Mutual-aid, with 300 monthly installments for 60 months) offered a whole service package: taking care of the body, procuring the materials for funeral (coffin, altar with five stages and two artificial lotus), renting the hearse, preparing the decorations and other ornaments (two announcement papers, ashpot, and death robes), and handling cremation certificate as formal death certificate. Since 1977, Moon Rise also employed ceremony leaders (*shikaisha*) to act as director of ceremony.

As Japanese GNP was rising, the funeral companies offered more complicated ceremonies with funeral rooms instead of the usual ceremony as offered by Mutual-Aid. The costs were rising as years go by. At the end of 1990s, Moon Rise offered 21 different plans to its members, and the price tag for the programs was 240,000 yen (3,000 yen per month for 80 months). Even though many companies were offering various plans, but they were actually offering similar prices and similar level of services. In fact, if someone who is a member of Mutual-Aid has paid the installments for 10 months and decides to change company, Moon Rise (and other companies with NMAA license) will transfer the membership of the particular person to a funeral company in local area. In the end, the superiority of MAS lies in

its standardization of service in many aspects. As an example, Moon Rise offers several services on the day of the funeral, such as: announcement cards for funeral (*gokaiso-oreijo*), renting mourning suit and kimono, preparing the presents for the person who supervises the deceased body, funeral ceremony, post-funeral ceremony (including vegetarian dinner – *shojin ryori*), preparing both life and dried flowers, procuring Buddhist-style altar, etc.

As the funeral companies grow, some were beginning to offer new services and products, such as funeral halls. Similar to wedding hall (Edwards, 44), funeral ceremonies in funeral companies experienced a significant rise during the 1970s and 1980s. Based on funeral expert in Moon Rising, the change of location of the ceremony from houses to halls has transformed the atmosphere of the ceremony to formal and elegant. At the same time, the change of funeral location to halls has explicitly shown the drastic difference in terms of scale and costs of the funeral. The size of the funeral altar and the hall itself are the factors that decide the level of a funeral ceremony.

After the war, funeral rental business has become somewhat disintegrated. This included the rules on funeral accessories, transportation for the deceased body, and the procurement of funeral director, undertakers, and fisherman's parade. Since the quality of the service changed, the price also changed. Funeral rental and its workers are considered low-class social status. Lower quality of service and the "dirty" impression also encourage people to assume bad reputation on them. However, the lack of prominence of language, communication, and knowledge itself also contributes to the bad reputation they are associated with. Founders of funeral rentals typically are craftsmen who assume a low level of formal education. Their employees, including the parade workers, undertakers, etc. are also known for their bad attitude, and sometime disregard their own bosses, i.e. the founders of funeral rentals. Rumors have it that they spend their money on gambling and drinking, and when they run out of money, they return to the streets (Inoue S., 104).

The difference between such firms and the professional funeral companies are that the funeral companies are working together and the workers are also professionals. As MAS grows, the funeral companies are taking over the essential tasks with regards to taking care of deceased body. This element makes the funeral companies are considered professionals and have higher social status among community members. This is because the maintenance of deceased body functions as the integrating agent of cultural values in the community. By taking care of the responsibility, the companies have also taken over the basic of community solidarity. Therefore, not only the workers are more disciplined in delivering the services, they are also regarded as experts due to their knowledge of funeral ceremonies and their

positive attitudes. President Sakuma once told me proudly that “when I started this job, people were calling us *sogiya* (funeral maintainer), but now the people are calling us Moon Rise-san (person who works in Moon Rise) or *sogiya*-san (Mr. funeral maintainer; spoken in a positive context)”. The commercialization of funeral lies in the standardization of ceremonies and prices, which also contributes to the standardized funeral practices in Japan.

Now, the funeral rental (*sogiya*) has transformed into the funeral house (*sogisha*) by adopting management principles from funeral companies in many aspects. The difference between a funeral house and funeral companies is subtle. The difference is on the formal status of the companies, in which the companies are typically owned by NMAA. They also recruit Mutual-aid members and have branches in several locations. They also offer wedding services. However, funeral houses are independent firms (typically family-owned) operating in open market. Interestingly, the profits of non-mutual-aid companies have been on the rise since the 1980s. This phenomenon suggests a stabilized Japanese economy and the ability of Japanese people to afford pay funeral in cash.

The rise of funeral industry in this era has to be associated with modernization, urbanization, and commercialization in Japan. MAC, which at first was one of the alternatives for lower class people to afford (lower-cost) funeral, has now spread over to reach middle-class people in both cities and towns. There is still a possibility of a saturation point in the middle of industrialization, migration to big cities, loosening of intra-community ties, specialization of tasks, and rising commercialization.

### 2.3. The History of Bellca Funeral Company

Since founded in 1969, Bellca has been serving a number of members' wedding ceremonies and funerals, the two big ceremonies of life. The base spread from Hokkaido to Kyushu, and the help of ceremonial funerals started around the part of Hyogo prefecture now spread all over the country, supporting members' important days from Hokkaido to Kyushu. Bellca is the largest in terms of size and the number of facilities held by mutual aid associations across the country. The number of subscribers 2 million with mutual aid association nationwide. More than 35,000 people conduct funeral at Bellca yearly.

Year	Description
1969	Start as "Hanshin Mutual Assistance Center (later Mutual Assistance Center Co., Ltd.)" in Baba Town, Nishinomiya City, Hyogo Prefecture
1973	Moved headquarters to Nishinomiya Hiramatsucho
1975	Opened the first wedding hall "Nishinomiya Tamaki." Headquarters moved to Nishinomiya City Tsugamogawa Town, changed its company name to "Mutual Assistance Center Co., Ltd."
1979	Establish subsidiary Fashion Circle "Kyo"
1980	Opened "Higashi Osaka Tamaki (formerly, Bell classical Higashi Osaka · present, Bell classic Osaka)"
1981	Acquired membership underwriting "Kushiro Heikekaku (now, Earl Bell Angers Annex Kushiro)" of the Kushiro New Life Mutual Assistance Center Co., Ltd.
1982	Opened "Mie Tamaki (present, Bell classic Mie)" · "Awajishima Tamaki."
1983	Opened "Koshien Tama Izumi (now, Koshien enforcement department)" · "Itami Tama Izumi (now, City Hall Itami)"
1984	Affiliated company "Hannan Mutual Assistance Center" opens "Kishiwada Grand Hall"
1985	Join membership underwriting of the Ceremonial Mutual Aid Center (Osaka) Co., Ltd.
1986	Membership acceptance of Tamama Group (Sapporo) Co., Ltd.
1987	Changed company name to "BELCO Corporation."
1988	Membership acceptance of Hakodate Mutual Assistance Center "Hakodate Tamaki (old) (now, Bell classic Hakodate)" acquired
1989	Membership acceptance of Shin Kyushu Mutual Assistance Center
1990	Membership acceptance of Tamaki Group (Asahikawa) Co.,Ltd. acquired
1991	Member underwriting of Belmonte (Toyama) Co., Ltd.
1992	Opened "Kushiro Belco Center" · "Sapporo Bello Kaikan." Accept acquisition of Yamaguchi Mitsuki center 's membership "Shimonoseki Tamama Hime (now, marriage Shimonoseki)"
1993	Constructed the "Osaka Airport Headquarters Building" and relocated its headquarters function
1995	"City Hall Akita Belco Congress Center" · "Hakodate City Hall" · "Eniwa City Hall" opened
1996	Underwriting membership of Muroran from Life Belmont Co., Ltd.
1997	Hotel & Wedding "The Bell Classic Group, " was launched wedding ceremony to "Bell classic."
1998	"Hotel Bell Classic Tokyo" · "Bell Classic Hakodate" · "Kushiro Grace Church" · "St. Sophia Church (Takamatsu)" opened
1999	Affiliate company "Hannan Mutual Assistance Center" opens "City Hall Kishiwada."
2000	Joel member underwriting. Take over the wedding hall "Sapporo Flora (present, Bell classic Sapporo Flora)"
2001	Member underwriting of Otaru Shinzo Mutual Association Co., Ltd.
2002	Affiliated company "Bell Wing Co., Ltd." acquired "Memorial Hall Stella (Nagari)"
2003	Affiliated company "Awajishima Mutual Assistance Center Co., Ltd." opens "City Hall Sumoto."

2004	Affiliated company "BELCO Higashiyamaguchi", "BELCO CITY Hall (Iwakuni)" · Affiliated company "Hannan Mutual Assistance Center" "City Hall Hamamatsu (Kishiwada)" · Affiliated company "BELCO Obihiro" Open City Hall (Obihiro)
2005	Opened "Art · Bell Angeles Kushiro Ryokan" · "Guest Inn Cities (Himeji)"·
2007	Affiliated company "BELTING Co., Ltd." opens "BRIDGAGOKU VELOGUE."
2009	Affiliate "Mariage Incorporated" opened "Bibai Ceremony Hall."
2010	Affiliated company "Bell Life Co., Ltd." opens "Earl Bell Angers Mie (Tsu city, Mie prefecture)"
2012	Opened new branch in Hokkaido, Kobe, Fukuoka, Yamaguchi, and Akita
2013	Opened new branch in Akita, Fukuoka, Yawata, Shimonoseki, Osaka
2014	Opened new branch in Akita, Osaka, Nara, Fukuoka, Takamatsu
2015	Opened new branch in Hokkaido· Sendai· Kansai
2016	Opened new branch in Kansai, Sapporo, Hokkaido, Miyagi, Yamaguchi, Takamatsu

Source : <https://www.bellco.co.jp/sougi/Source>

### III. A Transition of Japanese Funeral Ceremonies during the years 1921-1977 in the Prefecture of Aichi

#### 3.1. Introduction

Social and cultural changes that emerged with the transition from the community funeral by *Kumi* society to the commercial ceremony by funeral company have been analyzed by Suzuki Hikaru in her dissertation. Furthermore, she concluded that the transition from community rituals to commercial ceremonies did not appear as a polar opposition, but as part of the process of modernizing (Suzuki Hikaru, 2000).

*Kumi* society is a community of Japanese society especially in village area before the World War II. When a member of this community is died, all of members responsible to conduct a funeral ceremony. Every member did it as volunteer, and they didn't receive money. And in the next time every member received service from community when one of their family died. It is look reciprocal relationship (Hikaru,2000 ;p4). The commercial ceremony is the society that all of the task of every member replace by the funeral company and every member paid to this company.

The studies in changes of the funeral ceremony is also showed by Kenji Mori (2010; 146), who talked about the process of the *Kojinka* (個人化) in funeral ceremony to become more free. There is a tendency to be more flexible in deciding what the customer wishes in their funeral ceremony. According to him, *Kojinka* is associated with capitalism. In capitalism, money is most important, so if there is money involved they can do anything without having to depend on anyone else. Capitalist money system has also entered in the funeral business. Furthermore, Kenji (Ibid;154) stated that *Kojinka* also entered in the area of worker's families, where in the capitalist system the worker can be the wife that also works out of the house. This results in changes in family and community structures. These changes affect the tradition of organizing funerals. The changes include the rapid growth of funeral company, resulting in impression of a commercialization of funerals. Moreover, there are also changes in how they handle the bodies or the stiff, which was originally buried into the ground, to become cremated. Its cause of the increasing number of cremation facilities, so it makes it easier for people to have a cremation. For long time the image of soul is a terrifying image but when they handling the bodies change to become cremated, the image of funeral ceremonies has changed.

The changes described by previous authors are general changes in the industry of funeral ceremonies. They talked about the transition process of funeral industry in Japan globally. I am

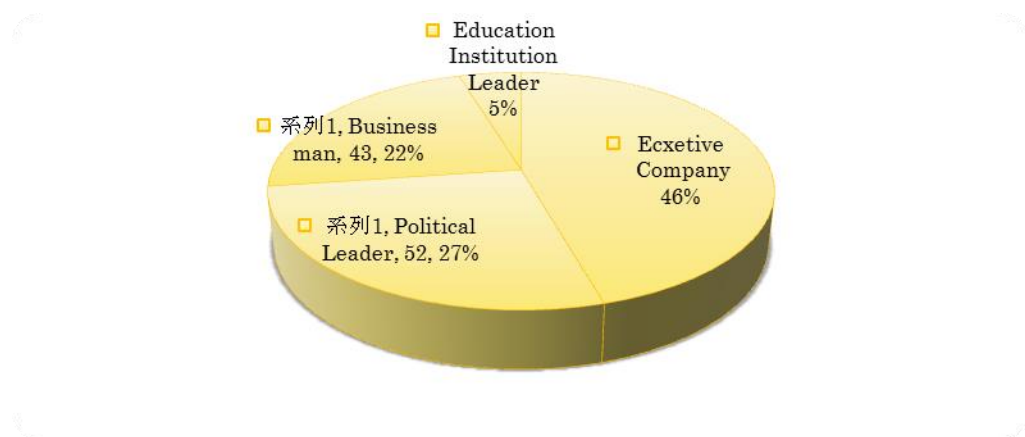
in a line with the thinking above but I would like to examine the transitions of funeral ceremonies in more detail.

The objective of this studies are; to know how the transition of Japanese funeral ceremonies during the early and middle Showa period taking an example from Aichi prefecture, what kind of change in type of funeral ceremony, what kind of change in style of altar, how trend of the change and how innovation in the business of funeral ceremony.

To answer those questions, my observation focus on two main points ; the type of the funeral and the content of the funeral ceremony itself. Funerals in Japan are usually divided into two types, namely: private funeral or *Missou* (密葬) and formal funeral or *Honsou* (本葬). The content of the funeral ceremony includes three main points, that are ; time and place of funeral ceremony, material of funeral ceremony and traditional funeral.

To see the changes that occur in the funeral ceremonies, I studied a series of data of companies record are arranged in time series. This data may not represent the whole illustration of changes of funeral ceremonies in Japan, however it could represent the changes of funeral ceremonies which were organized within the same company in a certain time and place.

The data that I have analyzed was from a collection of funeral ceremonial records of the Ichibanagi funeral company(一柳葬具總本店) in Aichi prefecture during the period of 56 years (1921-1977). I have observed 175 cases of funeral ceremonies that have been reported with the 709 photographs. The data consist of the name and the background of the deceased, the name of funeral leader or *Mosyu* (喪主), the home address, the date of death, the religious affiliation and the day and place of funeral ceremony with some photographs. The background of the users of funeral ceremony are showed in graph 1 below :



Graph 1. Profile of funeral ceremony`s user (175 person)

Aichi prefecture is located near the center of the Japan main island of [Honshū](#), with wide area 5,153.81 km<sup>2</sup> or approximately 1.36% of the total surface area of Japan. The western part of the prefecture is dominated by [Nagoya](#), a Japan's fourth largest city. And the eastern part is less densely populated but still contains several major industrial centers.

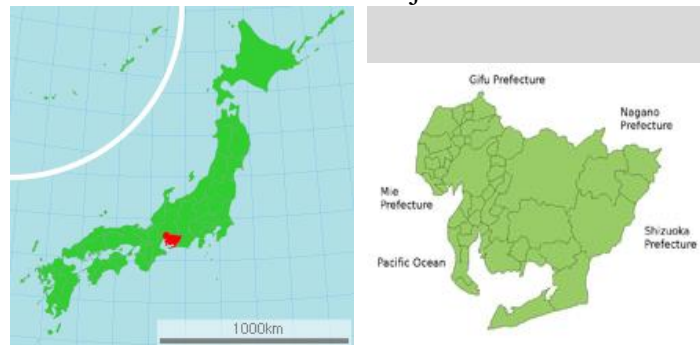


Figure 1 Aichi Prefecture

Ichianagi sougu souhonten is a funeral company was founded in 1877, in Nagoya by Ikusaburo Ichianagi. At first the name of his company was *Sougosou shouten Ichianagi* and in 1921 the name was changed into Ichianagi shokuten. In 1930 the company began to separate between Soushiki and Kokubetsu shiki firsttime conduct in Japan (Ichianagi;1977). In 1945, his company was fired, and open again in 1949. For the one hundred years celebration (Ibid;1977), this company have published a book “ Ichianagi sougu souhonten sougyou hyakunenshi “<sup>3</sup>, as the centenary of the founding of this company.

This Company is a reputable company in the funeral business association. Their reputation according to this book (Ibid ;1977,539-541) are ; the first company in Japan to hold *Shasou*, replacing *Chooji*<sup>4</sup> to become *Shiki-bun*, and to create *Saidan* and *Saigu saidan* according to religious affiliation of the deceased, started using *Reikyusha*, first to make a transparency contract system with the customer before funeral ceremony began<sup>5</sup> and the first to make commercial funeral advertisement in newspapers

Since its establishment in 1877, headquarter of this company located in Aichi-ken, Nagoya-shi, Naka ku. The company have significant growth, especially in 1963 when the capital value reached 1 million Yen, and then increased steadily to reach ten times (10 million Yen) in 1995.

### 3.2. Style of funeral ceremonies

Type of funeral ceremony are classified into : the treatment of dead bodies, religious affiliation and the format of ceremony. Based on the treatment of dead bodies

<sup>3</sup> I use 709 photographs from this book for source of data

<sup>4</sup> *Chooji*(弔辞) is a message of condolence and acquainted with the deceased at the funeral and as a speak to the deceased to say goodbye

<sup>5</sup> For long time, the price of funeral ceremony haven't transparency, but Ichianagi reformed it to become transparency price.



divided into ; burial (inhumation, grave), ash scattering (burial space), cremation (burial and direct cremation), frozen *fuso*, funeral trees, sky burial and burial at sea. Based on the religious affiliation are divided into ; Buddhist funeral, Shinto funeral, Christian funeral, and un-religion funeral. Based on the format of the ceremony is divided into ; state funeral memorial (prefecture funeral, city funeral and citizen funeral), family funeral, freedom funeral, living funeral, welfare funeral, before death funeral, formal funeral (*honsou*) and private funeral (*missou*).

### 3.2.1. The treatment of dead bodies

The bodies of the deceased are usually burned, but in my research, I found that the last case of grave funeral (土葬) was in Ikeda Masanobu's funeral in December 12, 1935. He is an owner of Ikeda store and a president of Nagoya Watch Business Association. After 1935, all of the bodies were burned or *Kasou* (火葬).



Picture 1a The last case of grave funeral (1935)



Picture 1b. The last case of grave funeral (1935)

In the history of transition from grave burial to cremation, according to research by Suzuki Iwayumi (2012) in Miyagi ken, *Kasou* first reached 100 percent of the funerals in 1985. But in Aichi ken, based on data from this company, *Kasou* first time reached 100 percent of the funerals in 1935. Aichi ken earlier than Miyagi ken in transition from grave to be burned funeral.

I found a special case of grave funeral in funeral of Alois Pach, a Catholic priest with religious affiliation of Divine Word Missionaries (神言会)<sup>6</sup> in July 7, 1969. This funeral is a special case, because the deceased is not Japanese and his religious affiliation did not allow the corpse be burnt.

<sup>6</sup> One of Catholic religious order, the Society of the Divine Word (Latin: *Societas Verbi Divini*, abbreviated SVD), popularly called the Divine Word Missionaries, and sometimes the Steyler Missionaries



### 3.2.3. The format of ceremony

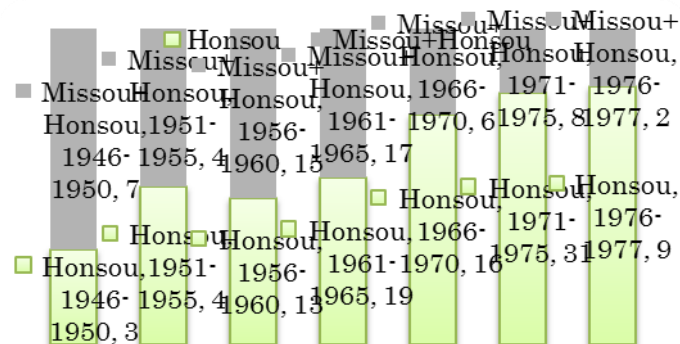
According to this company classification system, the funeral ceremony is divided into *Honsou* and *Missou* (formal funeral and private funeral). And there are several kinds of *honsou* ; *shasou*, *shisou* and *gakuensou*.

#### 3.2.3.1. *Missou* (密葬) and *Honsou* (本葬)

*Missou* is a private funeral performed only by close relatives funeral, basically this funeral refers to the funeral announcements and not for public exposure. This funeral has a very small number of such person and the private funerals are not included a *kokubetsu shiki* (Inoue,1990;106). Furthermore as Inoue said, when the high cost of funeral ceremony rised and the declining of economic condition, many people choose the ceremony which is limited for immediate family. This condition can be called the *Missou*.

After conducting *Missou* usually they conduct *Honsou* as the official ceremony for public expose community. But from the data that I have observed, not all of them conducting *Missou*. There are 57% do not conduct *Missou*, and just *Honsou*.

The procentage of customer who conduct only *Honsou* have been increased year by year. And the procentage of customer who conduct both (*Missou* and *Honsou*) have been decreased ( graph 3). This graphic show that the need of place for funeral is increasing



Graph 3. The Format of Honsou and Missou

#### 3.2.3.2. The special type of *honsou*.

*Honsou* is a funeral ceremony for expose to the public community. There are several type of *honsou*. But based on data from this company there are 3 kinds of special *honsou*, namely; *shisou*, *shasou* and *gakuensou*

##### 3.2.3.2.1. *Shisou* (市葬)

This funeral is special funeral only for the death of the person who contributed to the city, like a city mayor. Based on the data, the first *shisou* was held on January 1, 1942. This

funeral ceremony is conducted in city office of Nagoya, with the deceased Agata Sinobu, a former mayor of Nagoya city.



Picture 3a. The first shisou (1942)  
shisou(1942)



Picture 3b. The first shisou(1942)

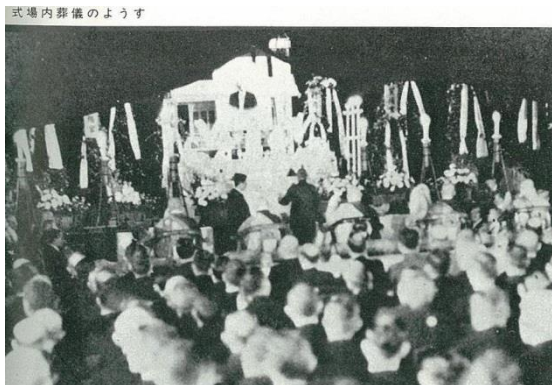


Picture 3c. The first

### 3.2.3.2.2. Shasou (社葬)

Shasou means a funeral conducted by the company for the executive of company, for example founder and director of the company. In this ceremony the mourners mention the kindness and merit of the deceased during his life. The mourners are the employees of the company and the ceremony is held on weekdays. The place of the ceremony should not be in a Buddhist temple, some are held at the Hotel. If the deceased is no religious affiliation it should not use a Buddhist priest. (Nakamaki; 2005).

I observed all of photograph of funeral from 1921-1977 and I found the first time to hold *shasou* was in January 13, 1941 for Oshima Yukichi, a director of Shin Aichi Shinbun Sha Daikoudou company, and then increasing year by year.



Picture 4a. The first time held *shasou* (1941)  
(1941)



Picture 4b. The first time held *shasou*

### 3.2.3.2.3. Gakuensou (学園葬)

The first time *Gokuensou*<sup>8</sup> was held on February 2, 1972, held at the office of mayor of Nagoya city, for funerals Goto, president of Aichi University of Technology. with religious affiliation of soto syu

<sup>8</sup> Basically, Gakuensou and Shasou is the same. Gakuensou conduct by University and Shasou conduct by the company





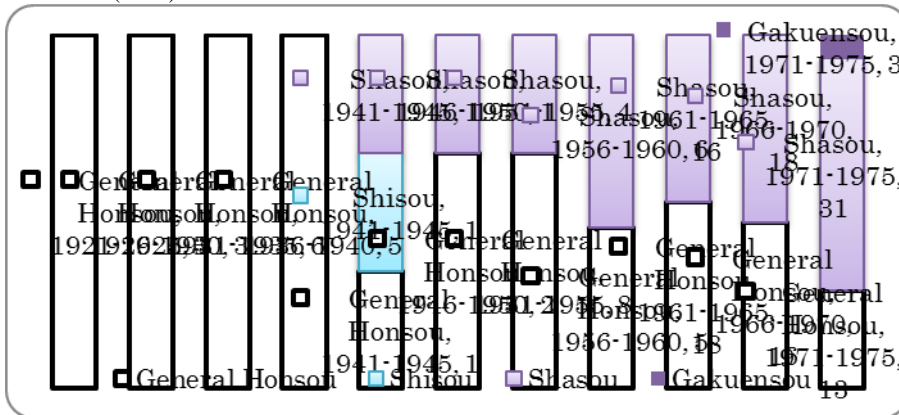
Picture 5a. The first akuensou (1972 )



Picture 5b. The first Gakuensou (1972 )



Picture 5c. The first Gakuensou (1972 )



Graph 4. The Format of Honsou

### 3.3. Content of Funeral ceremony

The content of the funeral ceremony includes three main points, that are ; time and place of funeral ceremony, material of funeral ceremony, and traditional funeral.

#### 3.3.1. Time and Place of Funeral ceremony.

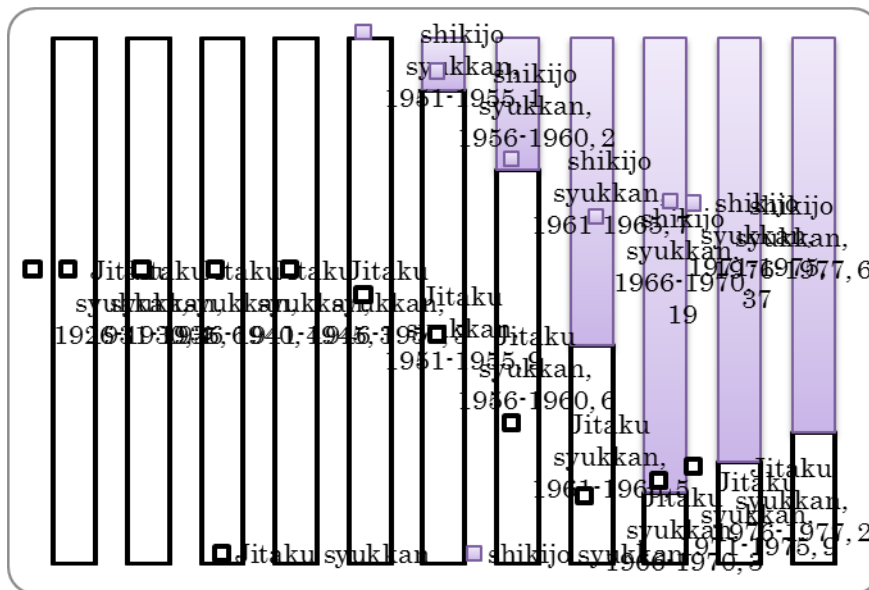
##### 3.3.1.1. Time (waiting time between Misou and Honsou)

Based on data from this company in the period 1921-1977, between Misou and honsou there are average 3.05 days waiting time. because of the required preparation for the mourners who will come to the ceremony. The time is used for the preparation of the deceased family, as well as preparation of mourners who came from distant places..

##### 3.3.1.2..Place of funeral

Method of data collection in my research is based solely on appearance in the photograph. It is possible there is an organized funeral *Jitaku syukkan* (自宅出棺) or *shikijo syukkan*(式場出棺), but it is not visible in the photograph.

Graphic 5 showed that the ratio of *jitaku syukkan* until the period 1946-1950 are the big ratio, but after this periode started decline. In contrast , in the period 1951-1956 the ratio of *shikijo syukkan* increased year by year. This data indicates that the “need” of communities for places for funeral ceremonies are increasing.



Graph 5. The Jitaku syukkan and shikijo syukkan



Picture 6 a. The jitaku syukkan (1951)



Picture 6 b. The jitaku



Picture 7a. The shikijo syukkan (1946)



Picture 7b. The shikijo

### 3.3.2. Material of Funeral Ceremony.

Materials that used in the ceremony according to the dictionary of funeral (p.70) include ; altar (*saidan*), *noukan*, dry ice, receipcionis and furniture, *makura kazari*, *kazari*

*saidan*, *kanban*, *Reikyusha*, food for *otsuya* and funeral ceremony, *wakare hana*, etc. But in my research, I focus only on altar (*Saidan*) and car (*Reikyusya*).

### 3.3.2.1. Saidan (祭壇)

I observed the component of altar like; style of photograph, place of photograph and place of *Ihai*.<sup>9</sup> (位牌)

#### 3.3.2.1. 1. Style of photograph

*Iei* (遺影) is a picture of the deceased which is placed on the altar. This picture is a painting made by an itinerant photo painter around the village. Before the Meiji era, *iei* was only made especially for the *Tenno* (emperor), *Buke* (the samurai) and *Kizoku* (the honorable). In the Nishin and Nichiro war many people died, and the photos of deceased were published in the magazine. The *Iei* was popular since the late Showa era, therefore there was a special place to put a photograph of the deceased in the altar. In this era, many people prepared a painting of themselves before they died. If the deceased has no religious affiliation, there was no *ihai* and only *iei* in the altar. (Shinya Yamada; 2004)

For several years pictures of the deceased were placed in altar and had a very formal with straight ahead style. In my research, I found the first photograph to be placed tilting and to look informal was on November 25, 1932 at funeral of Yoshida Taichiro, owner of Kamesuehiro with religious affiliation of Jyodo shinsu. The ceremony was held at Koumyoji temple. The increasing of tilting photograph number is showed in graph 8



自宅祭壇飾りつけ

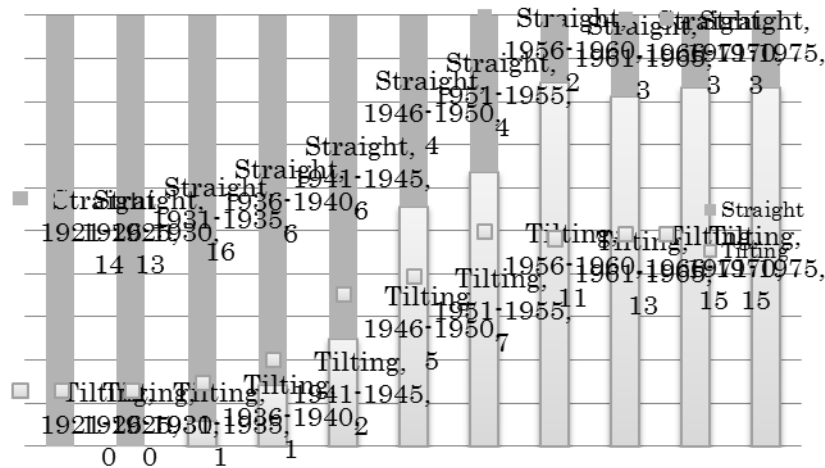
Picture 8a. The first time tilting photograph (1932)  
photograph (1932)



Picture 8b. The tilting

<sup>9</sup> **Ihai.** Japanese Buddhist mortuary tablets with which the spirits of deceased ancestors are associated.

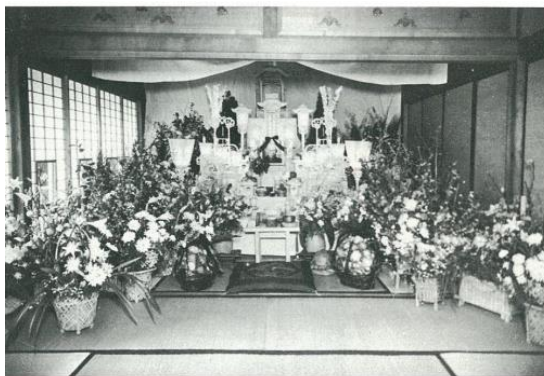




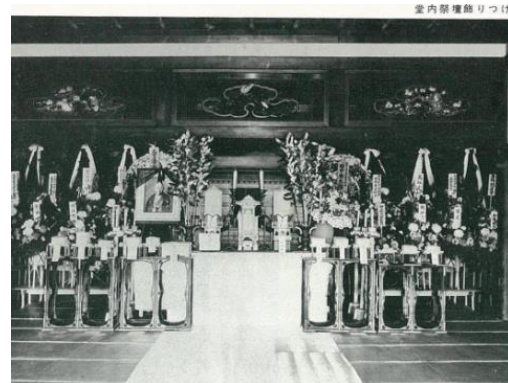
Graph 6. The number of tilting and straight photograph

### 3.3.2.1. 2. Place of photograph

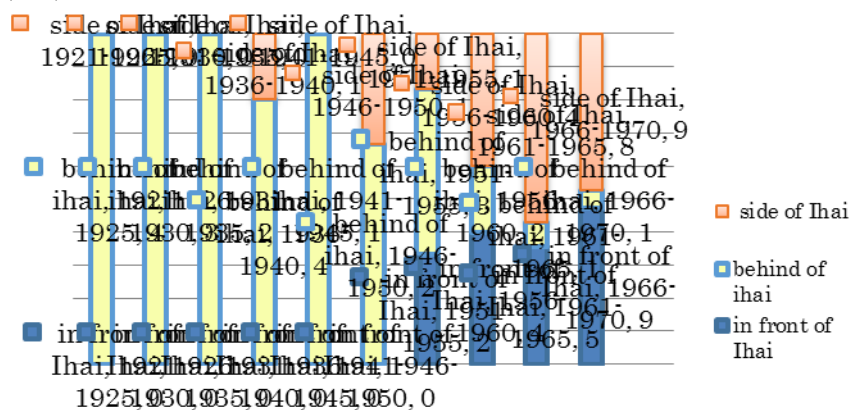
Photographs of the deceased in the altar were usually located in the center of altar in line with ihai and honzon The original honoured one; the most honoured of all Buddhas; also the chief object of worship in a group; the specific Buddha, (本尊). In my research, I found the first time a photo layout was not in the middle, but on the side of the altar on November 27, 1939 for the funeral of Yamamoto Gonjouro, business owner of Yamamoto souten with religious affiliations of Joudo shinsu. And after that increased year by year.



Picture 9. The photograph in center of the altar (1939)



Picture 10. The first time a photo side of



Graph 7. The place of photograph on the altar



*Ihai* of the deceased in the altar is usually located in front of photo of the deceased (Figure 3).. But in my research, I found the first time the location of *ihai* was behind the photograph was on February 6, 1950 in the funeral of Okuma Eiichi, Vice president of Nagoya Chamber of Commerce consultation. Graph 7 showed the ratio of customer who lay out photograph inside of *ihai* and front of *ihai* is increased year by year.



Picture 11. The photo behind of *Ihai* (1950)



Picture 12. The first time photo in front of *Ihai*. (1950)

Location of *Honzon* (本尊) looks in line with the *ihai* and photos, sequentially from top to bottom as follows: *honzon* – photo – *ihai* (figure 2). *Honzon* has not always visible in *saidan*, sometimes *honzon* placed behind the curtain. But I found the deviation of arrangement on April 12, 1969 at the funeral of Moroto Seiroku with *jyodo shinsyu honganji* religious affiliation. Arrangement of *honzon*, photos and *Ihai* look deviated from the standard arrangement. The deviation is the photo changed to be in front of *ihai*.

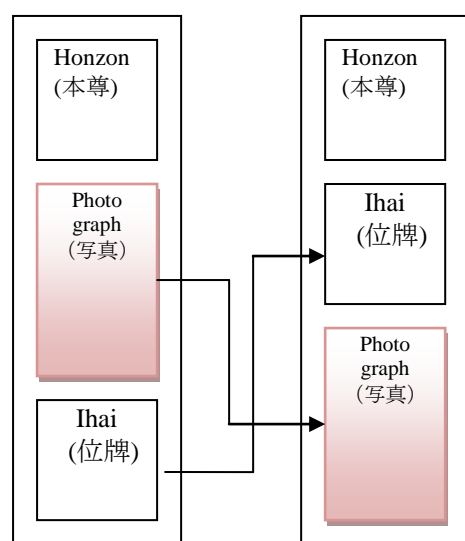
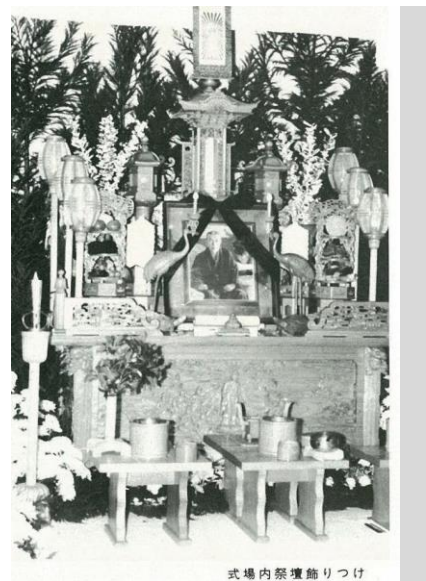


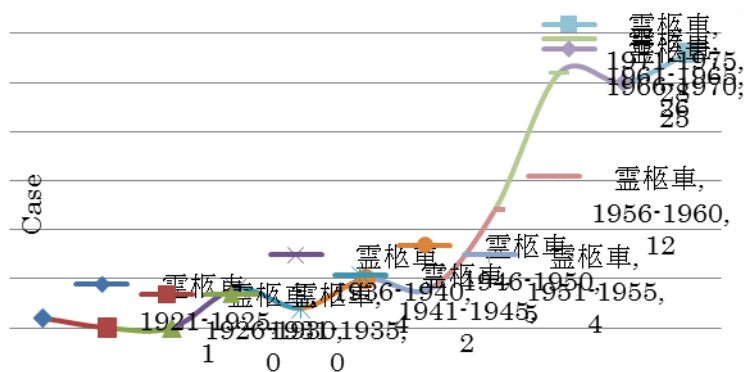
Figure 2..Standard arrangement of *honzon*, photo and *Ihai*



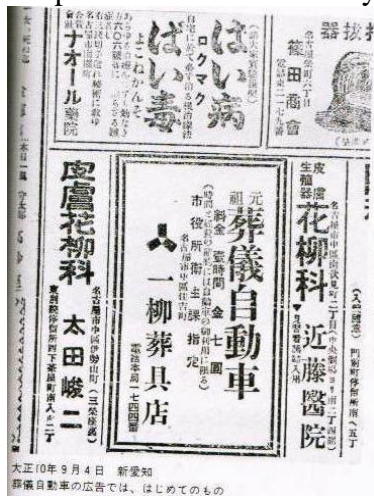
Picture 13. The deviation of arrangement (1969)

### 3.3.2.2.. Reikyusha

*Reikyusha* 【霊柩車】 is the car to carry the bodies from Otera or Funeral home to crematorium or cemetery. Based on my observations, the first time use *reikyusha* is announced in Shin Aichi newspaper in September 4, 1920 with charge 7 Yen per hour<sup>10</sup>. The number of *reikyusha*'s user from the year of 1921 to 1977 had increased. And start from 1956 the number had risen sharply, making it almost entirely using *reikyusha*. Regarding the model of car used, from 1921 to 1977 that was not changed (graph 8).



Graph 8. The number of Reikyusha



Picture 14 a. First Reikyusha in Newspaper



Picture 14 b. Reikyusha in 1922



Picture 14 c. Reikyusha in 1970

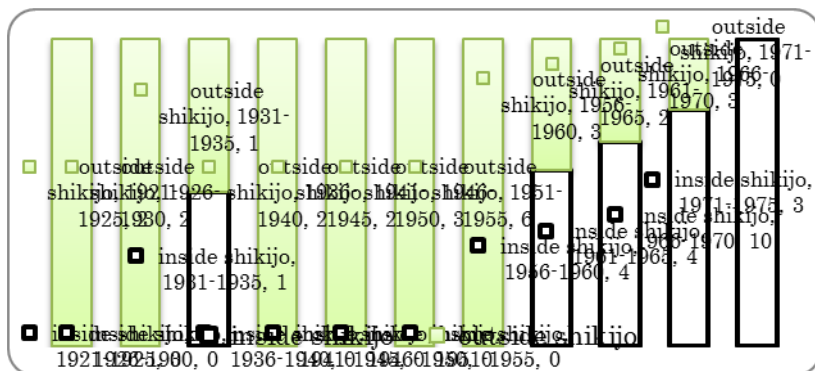
### 3.3.3. Change in Traditional Funereal

#### 3.3.3.1. Souretsu (葬列)

Souretsu is the procession of mourners to bring the bodies to the Crematorium. Based on my observations, many souretsu were implemented from 1922 until 1962. After that it was rarely implemented, although sometimes it was still performed, but the procedure was different. Formerly it was performed on foot, but now they use the car.

<sup>10</sup> Based on data from book *Ichianagi sougu souhonten sougyou hyakunenshi*, this company claim as the first user reikyusha for carry the deceased.

The percentage of sourets in shikijo increased year by year, this data indicates that in the beginning, Shourets was carried out on foot from home to Shikijo. But from 1960, Shourets was performed using the car until the *Shikijo*, and then in *shikijo*, *Shourets* was conducted by foot.



Graph 9. The number of Sourets inside shikijo and the out of shikijo



291

Picture 14a. Sourets out of shikijo(1922)



413

Picture 14b. Sourets inside shikijo(1922)



513

Picture 14c. Sourets by car (1972)

### 3.4. Conclusion

Based on my data from this company, majority of the user of ceremony is an executive of company, business man and the political leader (graph 1). As it has been noted by Kenji, in capitalism money is a King, and also in the funeral business. In my research, in which almost all respondents are famous and rich man, it is shown that the change of funeral ceremony are more free and flexible in expressing their last respects to the deceased. And based on my observation the need of more freedom funeral in Aichi prefecture has began in period of 1950-1960. Base from data of user of funeral ceremonies from this company, we can say that the emergence of a new type of funeral have begun by a group of rich people and have wide influence in society. And Ichianagi as an innovator in funeral industry understand it and take this business opportunity to become big business.

The transition in funeral customs during the years 1921-1977 in the prefecture of Aichi is shown in the type of funeral and the many practices in content of funeral ceremonies. Usually the funeral ceremony conducted at the home of the deceased, but since 1941 have presented a new style of funeral ceremony like *shasou* and *shisou* (see graph 4). In this style

of ceremonies the place of ceremony is not in the house of deceased and the mourner also deferent from usual. Based on the number of honsou increased year by year (graph 5), it showed that place of ceremony have changed to become in the funeral hall or in the hotel with more exposure to the public community

#### IV. The New Models of Funeral Ceremony in Japan: Case study of Funeral Ceremonies in SOGI Magazine (1991-2010 )

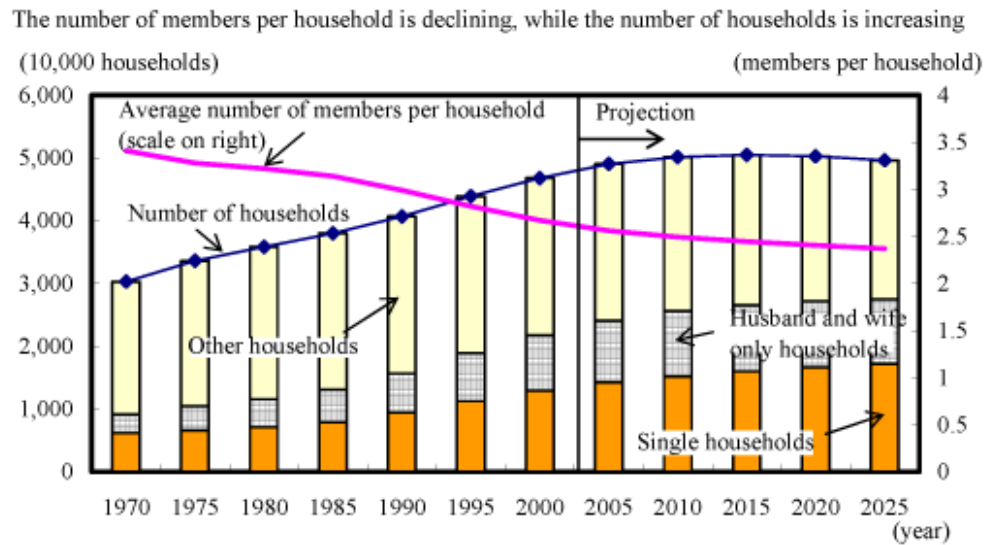
##### 4.1. Introduction

The *ie* (家) is a Japanese term that translates directly to “the household”. It means a physical home or can refer to a family’s lineage. It is popularly used as the “traditional” family structure. The symbolic *ie* refers not only to bloodlines but also to economic and socio-religious functions that take place within the family. Before the Second World War, in the traditional Japanese patrilineal household system (*ie*), the eldest son succeeded his father as the head of household and inherited the ceremonial rights. This system was legalized by the Meiji government in 1898.

The Japanese Civil Code (民法/Minpō) was established in 1896. It regulates the family and the succession system, retaining certain remnants of the old patriarchal family system that became the basis of Japanese feudalism. It was in this section that most of the postwar revisions of the Code were made. At the time, it was deemed no longer necessary or desirable to pay homage to the past, and the section dealing with family law and succession shifted closer to the European civil law.

However, after the Second World War and the economic boom in the 1990s, contemporary Japanese society moved towards a nuclear-style family with high proportions of elderly and low birth rates, which caused the concept of the household system to be weakened. Inoue (2013) stated that nuclear families lost their function as a collective unit, and the basis of Japanese society shifted from collective consciousness to individual consciousness.

**Figure 3-1-3 Trends in the number of households and the average number of persons per household**



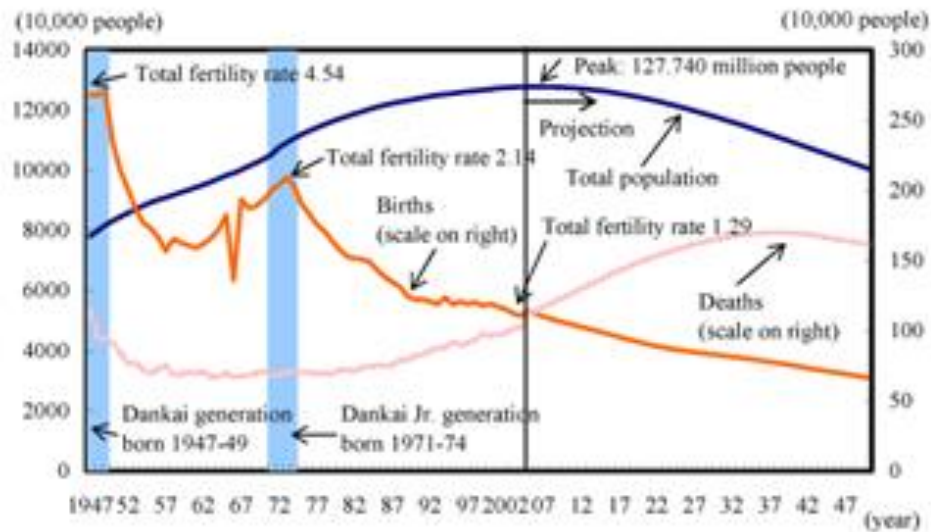
Notes: 1. For figures up until 2000 the *Population Census*, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, was used. For figures from 2005 onwards *Households Projections for Japan*, National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, was used.  
2. The population projections are median estimates.

**Figure .1** Trends in the number of household and the average number of person per household  
(Mimistry of Internal Affair and Communications,2004)

Collective consciousness is the term used by Durkheim in his books *The Division of Labour in Society* (1893), *Rules of the Sociological Method* (1895), *Suicide* (1897), and *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912). In *The Division of Labour*, Durkheim argued that in traditional/primitive societies (those based around clan, family or tribal relationships), totemic religion played an important role in uniting members through the creation of a common consciousness (conscience collective in the original French). In the societies of this type, the contents of an individual's consciousness are largely shared with all other members of their society, creating a mechanical solidarity through mutual likeness. The totality of beliefs and sentiments common to the average members of a society forms a determinate system with a life of its own. This can be termed as collective consciousness.



(1) Population to begin to decline in 2007



Notes: 1. Population Estimates, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications; FY2004 Monthly Vital Statistics (approximate figures), Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare; Population Projections for Japan, National Institute of Population and Social Security Research.  
2. The population projections are median estimates.

Figure.2 Japan Population Estimation (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2004)

Durkheim argued that, in modern society, the highly complex division of labor produces 'organic' solidarity. Different specialties in the field of employment and social roles created dependencies that tie people to one another because they are no longer able to meet all of their own needs. In a society that is 'mechanical', for example, smallholders live in a society that is self-contained and are woven together by a shared heritage and a similar work.

In a modern society which is 'organic', workers earn money and have to rely on other people who specialize in certain products (groceries, clothing, etc.) to meet their needs. As a result of the increasingly complex division of labor, according to Durkheim, the individual consciousness develops in a different way from the collective consciousness - often even in conflict with collective consciousness. This change also occurred in Japanese society especially in funeral ceremonies.

Kenji Mori (2010; 146) discussed the change of the funeral ceremony in Japan, especially in the process of personalization or *kojinka* (個人化). There is a tendency to be more flexible in fulfilling the customer's wishes in their funeral ceremonies. According to Kenji Mori, *kojinka* is associated with capitalism. In the capitalism system, the most important thing is the capital (money). If money is involved, the customer can do anything without having to depend on anyone else. The sense of capitalism has also entered the funeral business.

Why the Japanese became *kojinka*? Murakami Kokyo stated that, in the bubble economy era, many companies in Japan were exponentially growing thus requiring an increasing number of employees. The relationships among community members became estranged and their life style also changed.

In the *kojinka* lifestyle, someone who has the money can express himself, or his existence, and it is reflected in the death ceremony as a success story and a happy ending note. But the freedom in the death ceremony is not an absolute freedom per se because there are some cultural values that must be obeyed. Therefore, in this study, I would like to analyze the degree of freedom that money allows the spender to express himself in funeral ceremonies.

Numerous previous authors discussed the general changes in the industry of funeral ceremonies. While they analyzed the transition process of the funeral industry in Japan from a broad perspective, I prefer to study the transitions of funeral ceremonies in a more detailed manner. The objective of this study is to examine the changes in the funeral ceremonies, especially in the style of funeral and the content of the altar.

## 4.2. Research Methods

Based on my working experience in a funeral service company, when someone loses a family member and then calls a funeral service company, the first thing that is asked by the company is which style of funeral ceremony does the family want to give the deceased. The decision of the ceremony style will significantly affect the contents of the funeral procession, the style of the altar, the design of the room, etc. Therefore, the study of the development of funeral ceremony styles is a necessary step.

To answer those questions, my observation focuses on two main points: the type of the funeral and the content of the funeral ceremony itself. After making the decision about the funeral, the next step is to choose the altar in accordance with the type of funeral. Therefore, I focus on two objects for this observation, i.e. the type of funeral and the content of the altar.

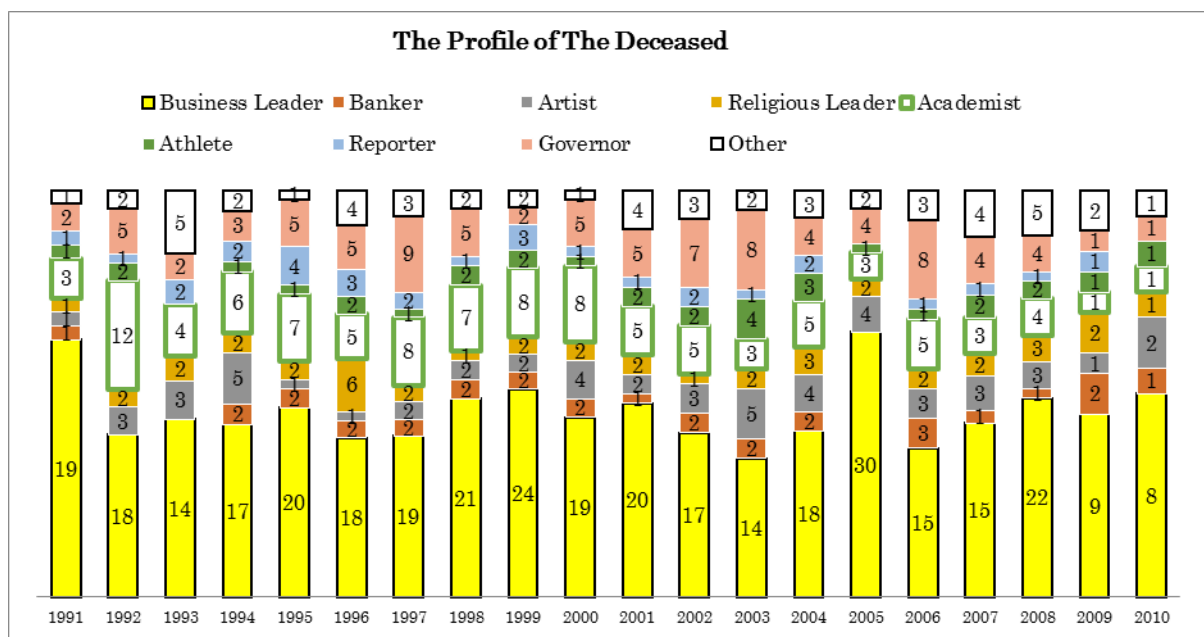
The materials used in a funeral ceremony according to the dictionary of funerals (p.70) include: altar (*saidan*), *noukan*, dry ice, receptionist and furniture, *makurakazari*, *kazarisaidan*, *kanban*, *reikyusha*, food for *otsuya* and the funeral ceremony, and *wakarehana*. However, in my research, I focus only on the altar, or *saidan*(祭壇).

The data that I have analyzed is from a collection of funeral ceremony records of SOGI Magazine spanning over a period of 20 years (1991-2010). The basic data consists of: name of deceased, the background of the deceased, the type of ceremonies, the religious



affiliation, and the age of the deceased. I have observed 789 cases of funeral ceremonies that have been reported along with the 2,330 photographs in the magazine. SOGI magazine is a magazine of funeral services and is published every two months. It was first published in 1991. This magazine is considered a reputable company in the funeral magazine business.

The backgrounds of the deceased, which include a variety of professions, are shown by figure 1 above. The backgrounds of the users of funeral ceremony are showed in the graph below.



**Graphic 1. The profile of the deceased**

Graph: shows that the majority of backgrounds of the deceased are: business leaders, academics, government/politic leaders, or famous persons.

#### 4.3. Type of Funeral

As stated in the introduction, when a person dies and the family member calls the funeral ceremony company, the company will ask detailed data of the deceased. The data regarding the deceased includes the deceased's religious affiliation, which will determine the type of funeral.

I observed the pictures from 789 people whose funeral ceremonies have been held and featured in SOGI magazine that has been published for 20 years. I categorized the types of ceremonies based on the format of the ceremonies and the religious affiliation of the deceased. Based on the format of the ceremony, I grouped the sample into two groups: *missou*(private funeral) and *honsou*(formal funeral). Meanwhile, based on the religious affiliation of the deceased, I grouped them into several types of funerals: Buddhism, Shinto, Christian, Catholic, and Non-Religious funerals. I excluded some data from people who held funerals before their death (生前葬/*seizen-sou*) because I limited the scope of the observation of the types of funerals to those who have actually died. For example, the figure below displays the funeral service of Mr. and Mrs. Kazuo, the President of Kazuki Fruit and Vegetables. (SOGi.vol 13. 2)



Figure 3. Seizen-sou (SOGi.vol 13. 2)

#### 4.3.1. The Type of Funeral ceremony based on the format of Funeral

Based on the format of the ceremony, I grouped the sample into two groups: *missou* (private funeral) and *honsou* (formal funeral)

##### 4.3.1.1. *Missou*(密葬)

*Missou* is a private funeral held only by close relatives. Basically, this type funeral makes use of invitations to the funeral through limited announcements and is not for public exposure. This funeral has a very small number of attendants, and it does not include a *kokubetsushiki* (Inoue,1990;106). Furthermore, as Inoue stated, because of the high cost of the funeral ceremony and the declining economic condition, many people choose the ceremony which is limited to immediate family members. In many cases, *missou* is a

ceremony for emergency situations, such as the funeral ceremony during the New Year, during which there is insufficient time to conduct *honsou*, or for suicide cases, etc.



Figure 4. Misou (SOGi.vol 13. 3)

#### 4.3.1.2. *Yujinsou*

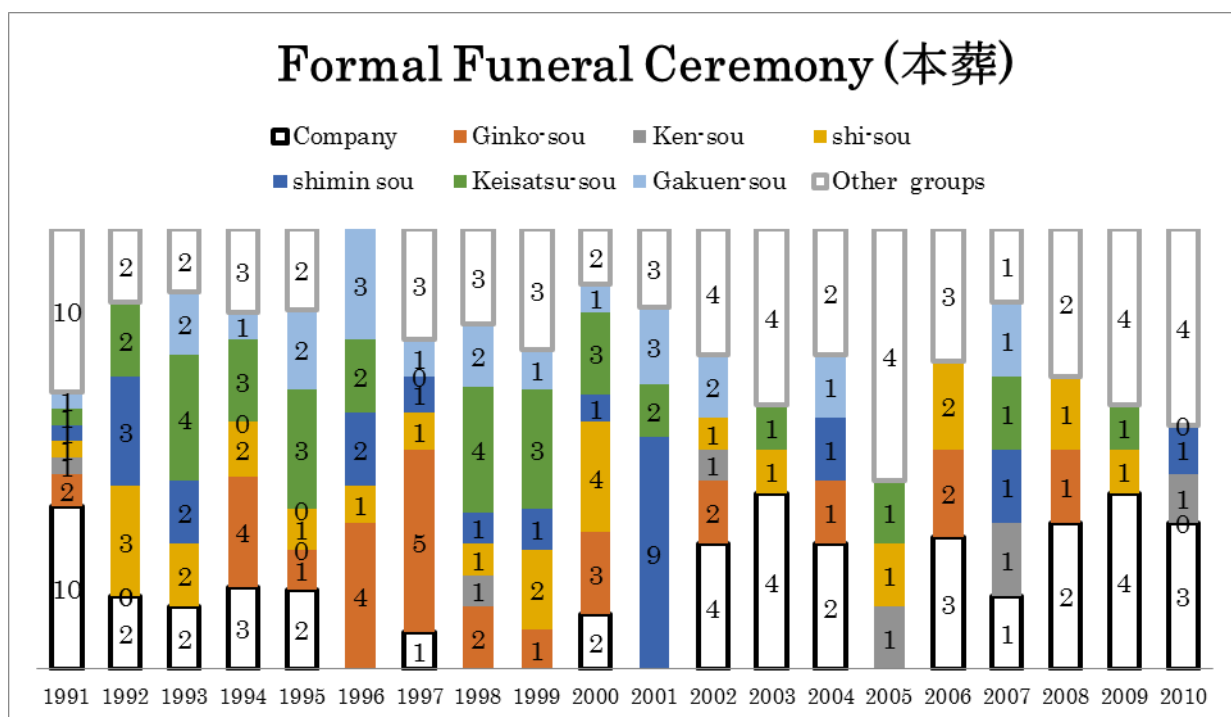
*Yujinsou* is the funeral ceremony held only for friends and close family. Recent funerals have been adapted into various forms, such as family funerals, day funerals, direct funerals, and night funerals. The examples include the funeral ceremony of Mr. Eitaro Matsuyama, a drama actor, who died in 21 January 1991. Chairs were not used in the ceremony, so the mourners attended the ceremony while standing. As displayed in the picture, the color of the flowers in the altar was red.



Figure 5. Yujin-sou (SOGI, March 1991 Vol 01. No.2

#### 4.3.1.2. *Honsou* (本葬)

*Honsou* is a funeral ceremony that is open to the public or community. In my previous research, I noted that there are three types of special *honsou*, i.e. *shisou*, *shasou*, and *gakuensou*. However, in this research, I found more than seven types of new formal funeral style (*honsou*).

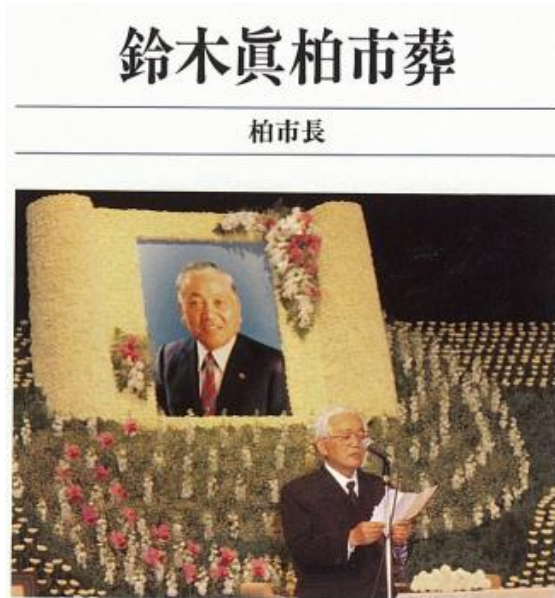


Graphic 2. Formal Funeral Ceremony (本葬)



#### 4.3.1.2.1. *Shisou* (市葬)

This funeral is a special funeral only for the death of a person who contributed to the city, such as the city mayor. Based on the data, *shisou* can be categorized into more detailed types such as *chosou*, *shiminsou*, and *kenchosou*.



**Figure 6 Funeral by City Governor  
Prefecture Governor**  
(SOGI, Vol 58. No.04)



**Figure 7. Funeral by**  
(SOGI, Vol 58. No.04)

#### 4.3.1.2.2. *Gakuensou*

Basically *gakuensou* is similar to *shasou*. The only difference is that *shasou* is conducted by a company, while *gakuensou* is conducted by a school institution. The photograph of the deceased, used in the *gakuensou*, generally, is of a formal style. However, in the funeral of Yamamura Fumio (June 1999), I noted that the photograph was tilted and there were many decorations on the altar. The altar was unbalanced with Fuji mountain-inspired decoration.

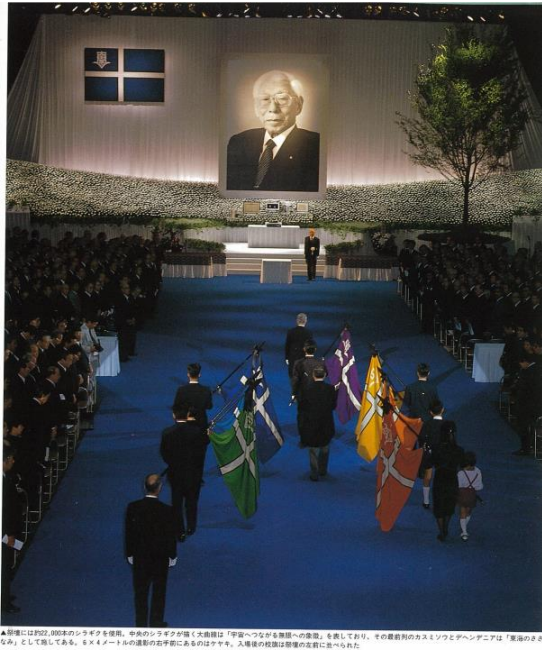
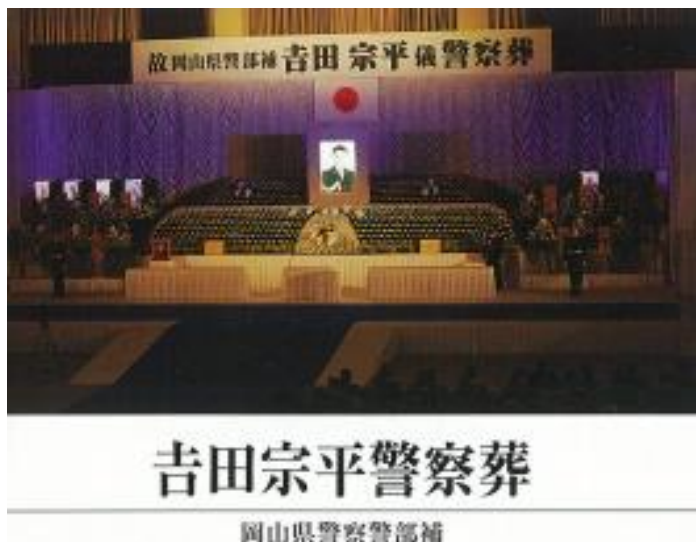


Figure 8. Gakuensou (Sogi, January 1992 vol.2)

Shigeyoshi Matsumae's *gakuensou*, founder of Tokai University (Sogi, January 1992 vol.2)

#### 4.3.1.2.3. Keisatsusou

Basically, *keisatsusou* is also similar to *shasou*. While *shasou* is conducted by a company, *keisatsusou* is conducted by a *keisatsu* institution.



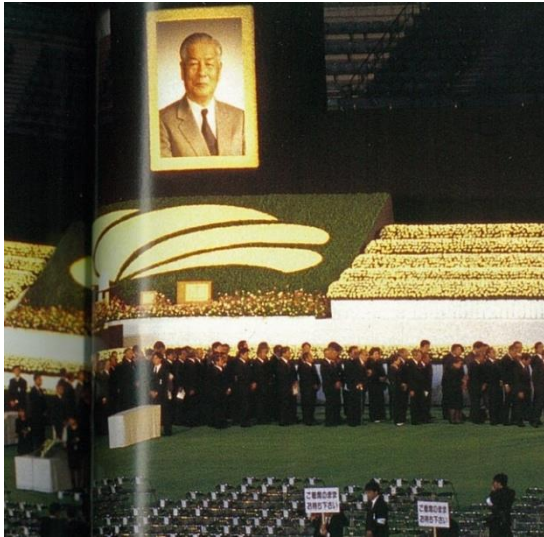


Figure 9. Keisatsu sou (SOGI, March 1994 Vol.4 No.2)

#### 4.3.1.2.4. Shasou (社葬)

*Shasou* means a funeral conducted by the company for the executives of the company, for example, the founder or director of the company. In this type of ceremony, the mourners mention the kindness and merit of the deceased during his life. The mourners are the employees of the company and the ceremony is held during the weekdays. The place of the ceremony should not necessarily be in an *otera*, as some were held in a Hotel. If the deceased had no religious affiliation, the ceremony should not use a Buddhist priest (Nakamaki; 2005). Based on the data, the number of group company funerals or *Godoshasou* (合同社葬) increased year by year.



Figure 10 . Sasou (SOGI, March 1994 Vol.5 No.2)



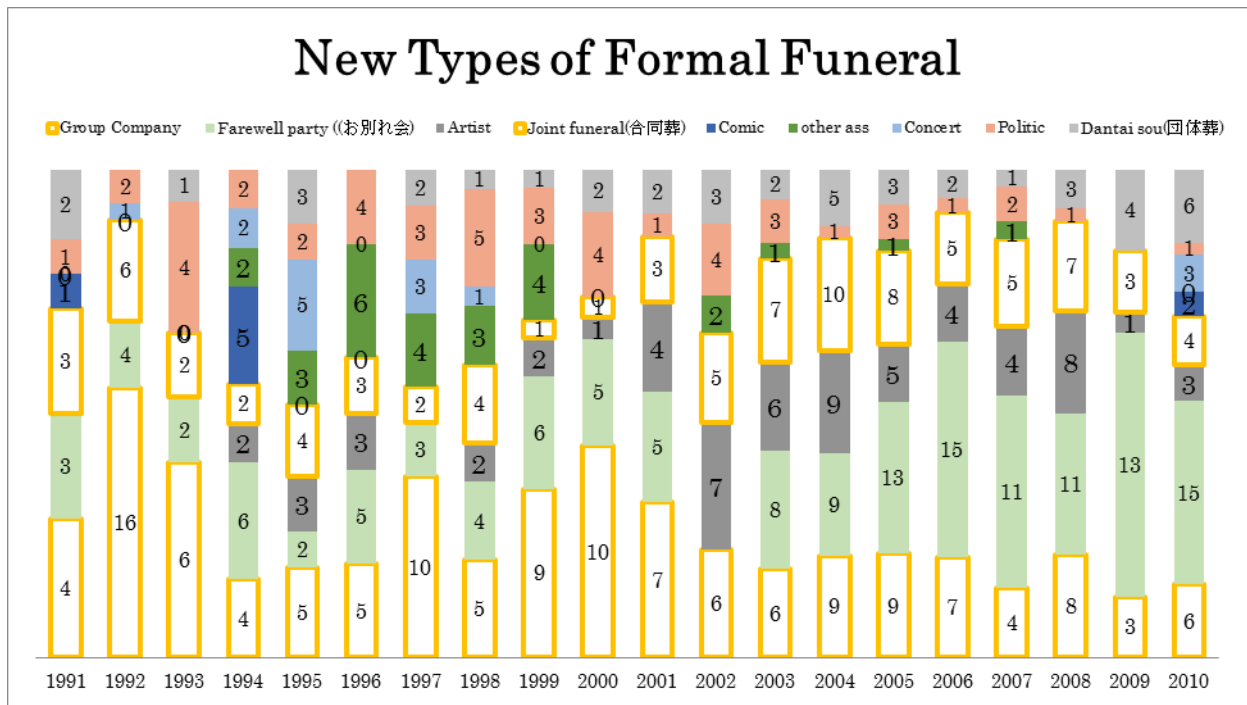
Figure 11. Sasou in Nagoya Dom (SOGI, March 1997 Vol.4 No.2)

The other philosophy of *shasou* is for a company to pay respect to the deceased as the deceased had dedicated his life to the company. *Shasou* always uses a large place for the funeral ceremony, for example, in a meeting hall or ballroom. Sometimes it even takes place in a sports hall or football stadium. For example, in the funeral of Matsunaga Kamesaburo (82), they used the Nagoya Dome as place for the *shasou* ceremony. Because he was a well-respected public official in the state-owned electricity company, a lot of colleagues and relatives wanted to mourn his death.

#### 4.3.1.3. Special type of Formal Funeral.

*Honsou* is a funeral ceremony characterized by its exposure to the public. In my previous research, there were only three types of special *honsou*: *shisou*, *shasou*, and *gakuensou*. However, in this research, I found more than 6 new types of formal funeral ceremonies (*honsou*).





Graphic 3. New Types of Formal Funeral

#### 4.3.1.3.1. Gorup Company Funeral Ceremony

*Shasou* can also be conducted by a group of big companies on a large scale, such as a multinational company (MNC). This case is referred to as a *shasou* group. The example of this type of funeral includes the funeral of Masaru Ibuka, the Founder of SONY Corporation.



Figure 12. Group of Sasou (SOGI, March 1998 Vol.3 No.2)

#### 4.3.1.3.2. Political Party Funeral Ceremony



Figure 13. Funeral for Politic Party –Jimintou sou (SOGI, May 1999 Vol.3 No.2)

#### 4.3.1.3.3. Music /Concert Funeral Ceremony/ Ongakusou



Figure 14. Ongakusou (SOGI, Vol.16 No.4)

#### 4.3.1.3.4. Farewell party (お別れ会)

A farewell party is a ceremony for inviting a variety of people, such as friends, company officials, and bereaved families, to part with the deceased. Along with the news of deaths of celebrities and entertainers, it is often reported that "the funeral is held only for relatives of the bereaved family and we plan to do a farewell party again at a later date". In the case of the non-religious funeral, it is referred to a "farewell (s) meeting"

However, in general, in what is referred to as a "farewell party" system, the family perform the private funeral for the deceased immediately after death, and then perform a farewell party afterwards. The acquaintances and friends would gather after one or two months to hold the farewell party. In the private funeral ceremonies, it is possible to perform the religious rituals based on the religion of the person and the family, but the farewell party seems to be a non-religious type of ceremony.



Figure 15. Wakarekai-Farewell Party (SOGI, Vol.16 No.4)

#### 4.3.1.3.5. Dantaisou (団体葬)



Figure 16 . Dantai sou (SOGI, Vol.16 No.4)

#### 4. 3.1.3.6. Joint funeral (合同葬)

“The joint funeral” is basically a combination of two types of funeral ceremonies: the private funeral and the organization funeral. This usually happens when the management or the executives of a company dies, and the private funeral ceremony is held in conjunction with the organization funeral. The billboard of the funeral usually reads "〇〇 house, △△ company joint funeral".

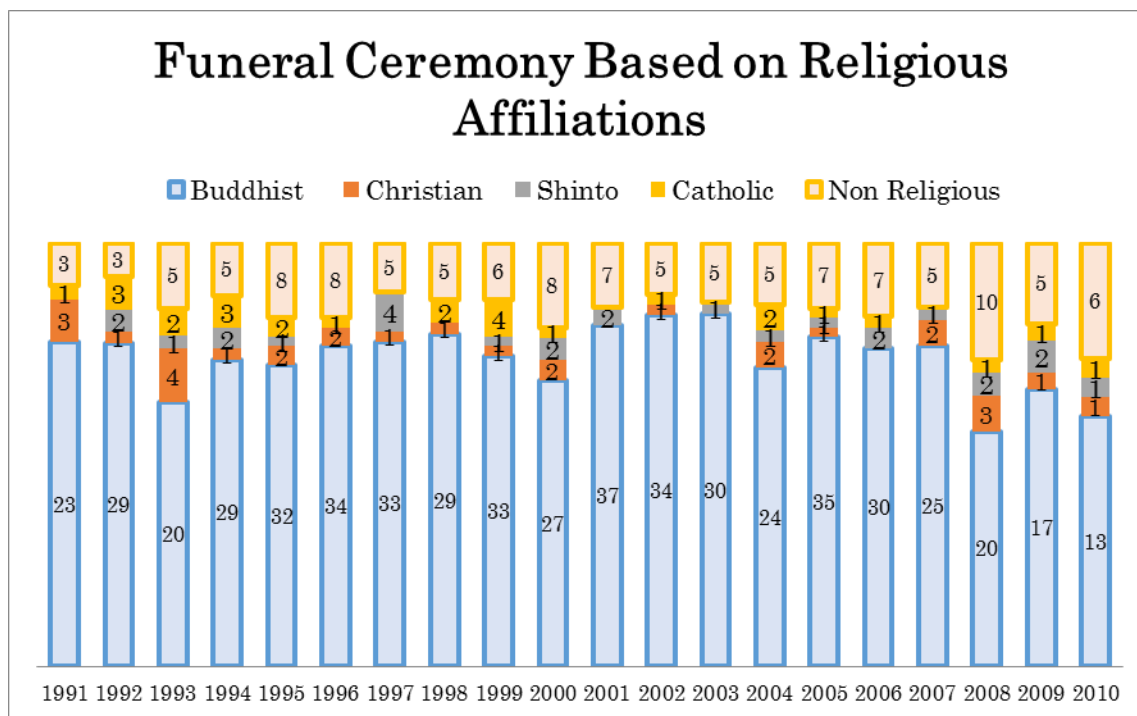


Figure 17. Godosou-Joint Funeral (SOGI, Vol.16 No.4)



#### 4.3.2. Type of Funeral Ceremony Base on Religious Affiliations

There are several types of funeral ceremonies conducted in relation to religious affiliations: Buddhist, Christian, Shinto, Catholic, and Non-religious Funeral.



Graphic 4. Funeral Ceremony Based on Religious Affiliations

##### 4.3.2.1. Bukyosou



D A T A	
■ 日 時	平成3年1月10日(木) 13時
■ 場 所	東京・千日谷会堂
■ 葬儀形式	仏式
■ 葬儀委員長	斎藤寿平
■ 喪 主	山崎恭子(一女優・久里千春・妻)
■ 祭 壇	白木祭壇
■ 式 次 第	①導師入室②開式の辞③読経④平経 ⑤お別れの平経⑥読経⑦平経⑧読経⑨読経 ⑩読経⑪導師の葬告⑫読経⑬読経⑭読経⑮読経⑯読経⑰読経⑱読経⑲読経⑳読経㉑読経㉒読経㉓読経㉔読経㉕読経㉖読経㉗読経㉘読経㉙読経㉚読経㉛読経㉜読経㉝読経㉞読経㉟読経㊱読経㊲読経㊳読経㊴読経㊵読経㊶読経㊷読経㊸読経㊹読経㊺読経㊻読経㊼読経㊽読経㊾読経㊿読経

Figure 18. Bukyo-sou (SOGI, Vol.16 No.4)

#### 4.3.2.2. Shintousou



Figure 19. Shintou sou (SOGI, Vol.16 No.4)

#### 4.3.2.3. Catholic



Figure 20. Katoliksou (SOGI, Marech 2000, Vol.18 No.2)

#### 4.3.2.4. Protestant



**Figure 21.** (SOGI, September 2000, Vol.10 No.5)

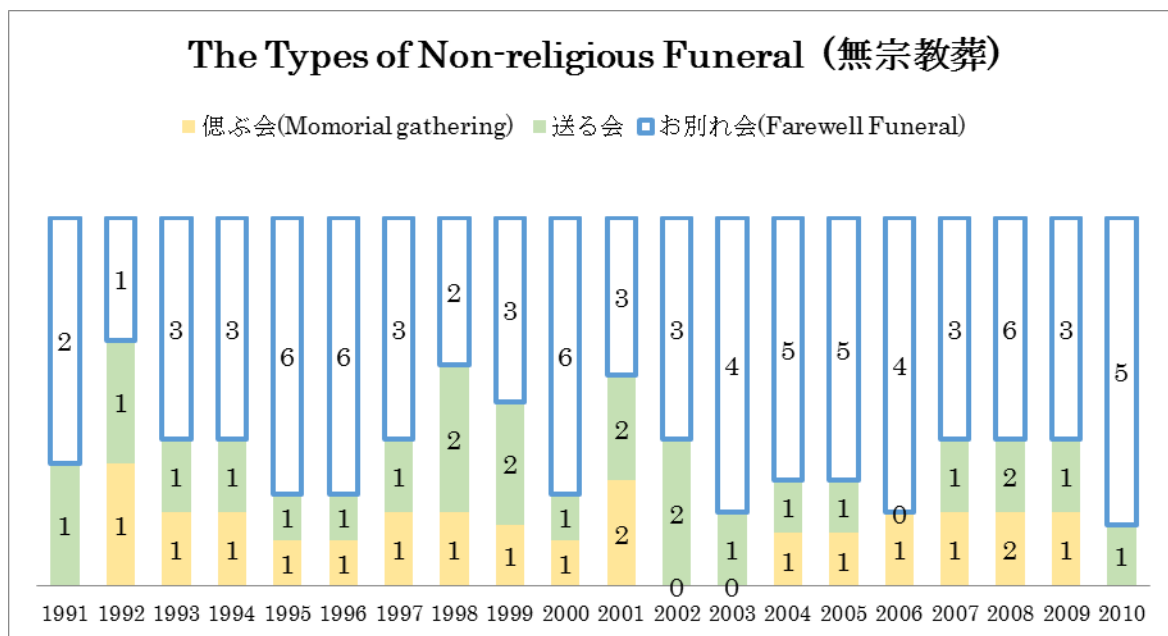
#### 4.3.2.5. Non-religious funeral (無宗教葬)

It is common that funerals are traditionally conducted as religious ceremonies. However, recently, a type of funeral that is called "non-religious funeral" has appeared and it has become a hot topic in the industry. The non-religious funeral is a funeral that gives farewell to the deceased in a "free-style" norm that does not involve funerary acts by religious people and is not associated with any of the existing funeral methods or traditional manners of certain religious denominations.

The non-religious funeral is sometimes called "free funeral," and serves as a non-constrained reflection of the feelings of friends and others. In other words, it is a customized funeral ceremony.

Among these styles, there is one called "musical funeral," which is also increasingly popular. In this type of funeral, the family invites musicians to play music that the deceased liked.

There are at least three types of non-religious funeral in Sogi Magazine: 偲ぶ会 (Memorial gathering, 送る会, and お別れ会 (Farewell funeral) . Among these three, the farewell funeral type is growing rapidly.



**Graphic 5. The Types of Non-religious Funeral (無宗教葬)**

#### 4.4. Altar of the Funeral Ceremony

The data that I have analyzed is from a collection of funeral ceremony records in the SOGI Magazine from 1991 to 2010. I have observed 789 cases of funeral ceremonies that have been reported along with the 2,330 photographs published in the magazine. I have analyzed the photograph of altars in the funeral ceremonies.

Some of the basic components of *Hana Saidan* are the photographs of the deceased, flower arrangements, *Ihai*, etc. In my research, I focus my observation of the photographs of the deceased and the style of the altar.

Altar (祭壇)							
Photograph						Style Altar	
Style		Colour		Frame		Symmetric	Asymmetric
Formal Style	Relax Style	black white	color	standard	unique		

Table 1. Focus on observation of the altar (Photograph and Style of Altar)



#### 4.4.1. Photograph of the Deceased

My observation of the photographs of the deceased focused on photograph style, color of the photograph, and photograph's frame.

##### 4.4.1.1. Photograph Style



Figure 22. Straight photograph( SOGI, May 1991 Vol.1No.3



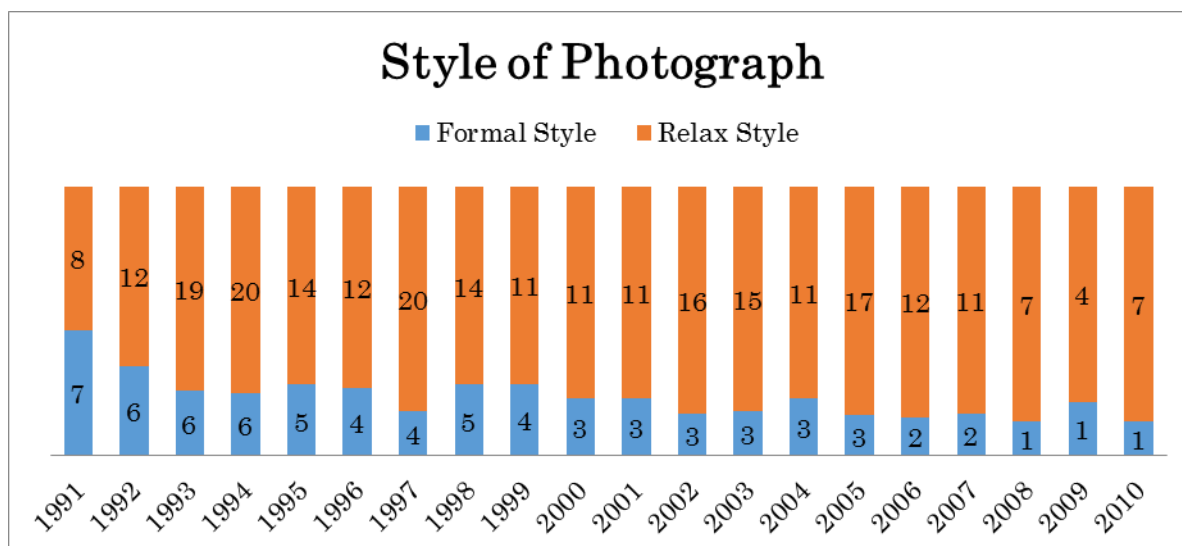
Figure 23. Relax style photograph

(SOGI, Vol 16 No.1)  
No.4)

Figure 23. Relax style photograph

(SOGI, Vol 16

The shift of the trend from formal straight photographs to formal tilt photographs, throughout the years, is displayed in the graph below.

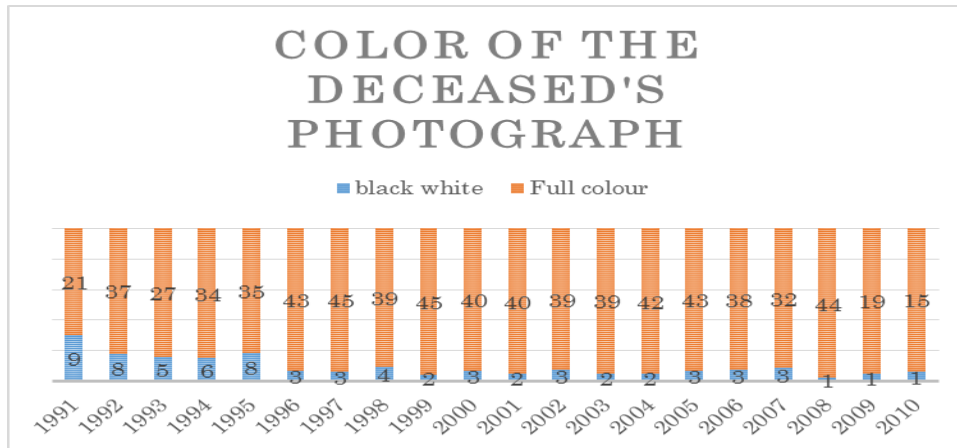


#### 4.4.1.2. Color photograph



Figure 24. . Black White Photograph  
(SOGI , November 1993, Vol 3,No,6)

Figure 25. . Color Photograph  
(SOGI , November 1993, Vol 3,No,6)



#### 4.4.1.3. Photograph Frame

In the altar at Namiki Michiko's funeral, they used an apple as the frame of the photograph. She was a famous singer in the post World War 2 era.



Figure 26. Unique Frame Photograph (SOGI, November 1994, Vol 7, No5)

ased on the data, I noted that the first time a big-sized photograph (4 x 6 m) was used was in

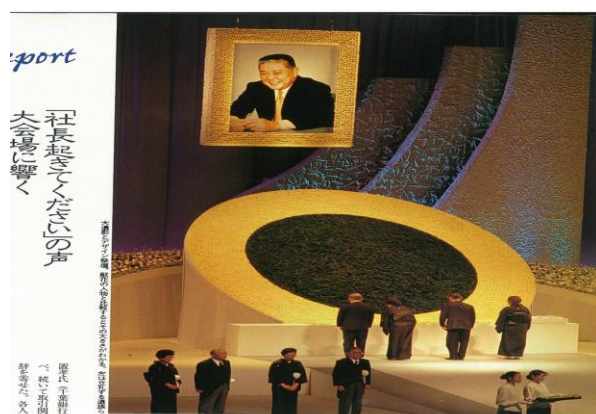
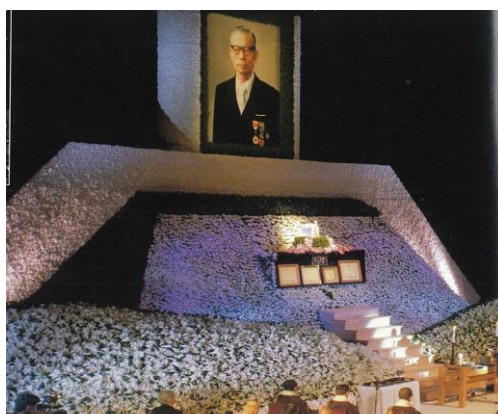
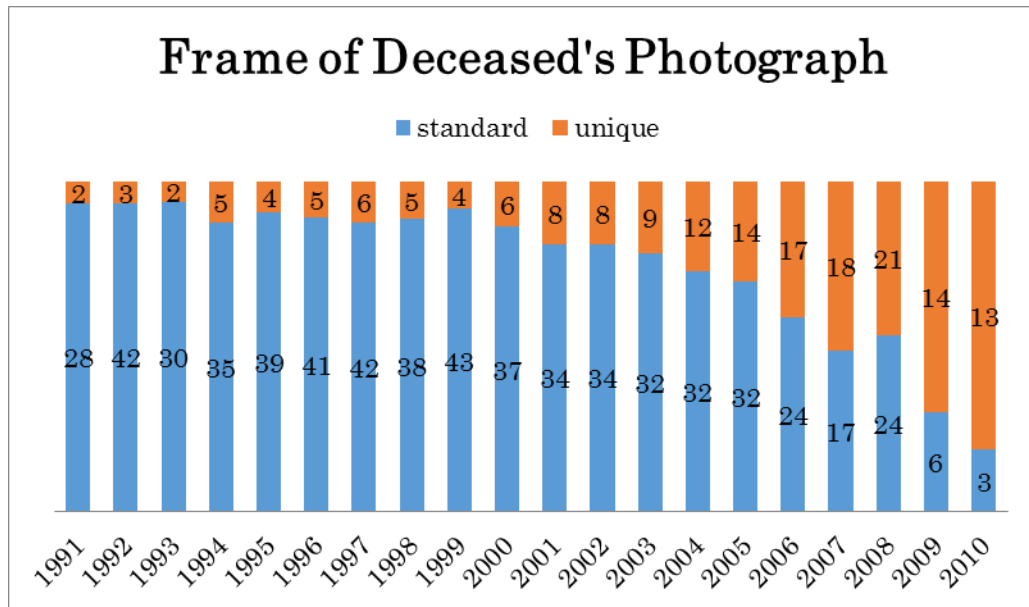


Figure 27. Big Size Photograph



May 1991. Since then, the utilization of big-sized photograph increased year by year from

1995 to 2010. The frame of the photograph also changed from a simple frame style to a more creative frame style.



#### 4.4.1.4. Special Photograph of the deceased



Figure 28. Screen as Photograph on Altar (Sogi Magazine, September 1992, p 24).

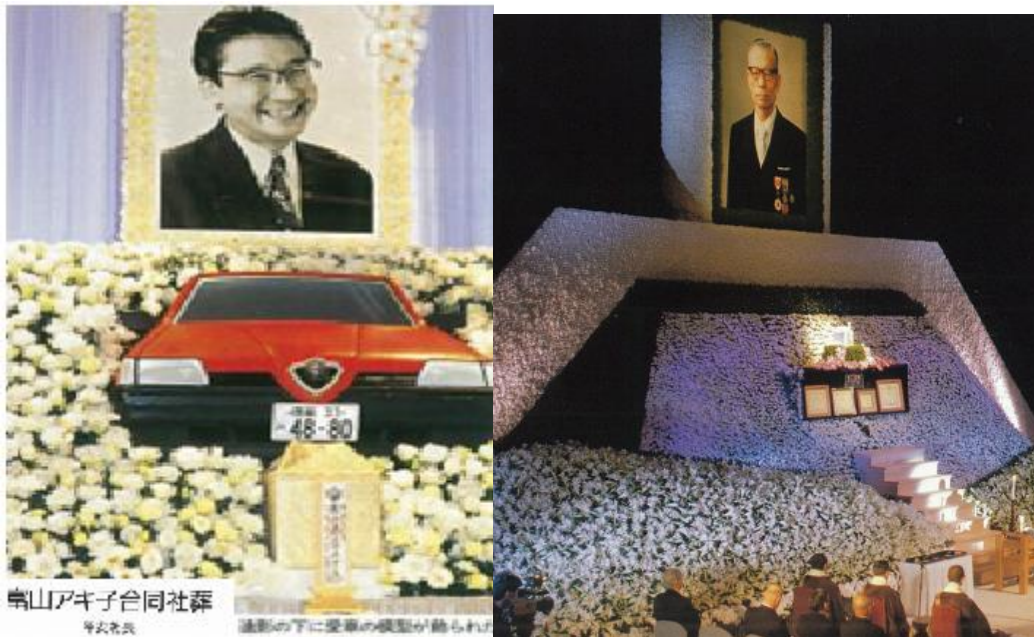


Figure 29. Many goods relate to Deceased on Altar

There was an image of the favorite car of the deceased on the altar at Katura Mikisuke's funeral ceremony.



Figure 30. Altar with big size 20 x 20 m

At the first stages of the funeral ceremony business boom, people tended to express their ancestor's success by displaying huge-sized photographs of the deceased at the altar. As the baby-boomer generation started to age and pass away, their families were eager to show the contributions of the deceased to Japanese economy during their golden age. As an example, we could see the Fuji mountain-inspired decoration at the funeral of Suzuki Syouji (61), director of Suzuki Auto parts. The funeral was attended by more than 2,000 mourners from all members of the company's groups.



At the funeral ceremony of Mifune Toshiro (73), a movie star, we can see that they did not use a formal photograph of the deceased, but instead used the photograph taken from one of his movies.





In the funeral of Isakshi Takashi (67), Yokohama City fire Department Head, we could see in the altar a style of Nichiren *shoretsu* with a mandala in the center and the photograph of the deceased next to it. On the left and right there were firefighter clothes and fire brigade flags, respectively. The favorite items of the deceased were used as decoration to remember the deceased.

#### 4.4.1. Types of Altars

The style of the altar changed more from a simple, or symmetric, style to a more asymmetric style year by year. I found that many souvenirs related to the deceased such as cameras, golf clubs, tennis rackets, etc. were displayed in the *Saidan*

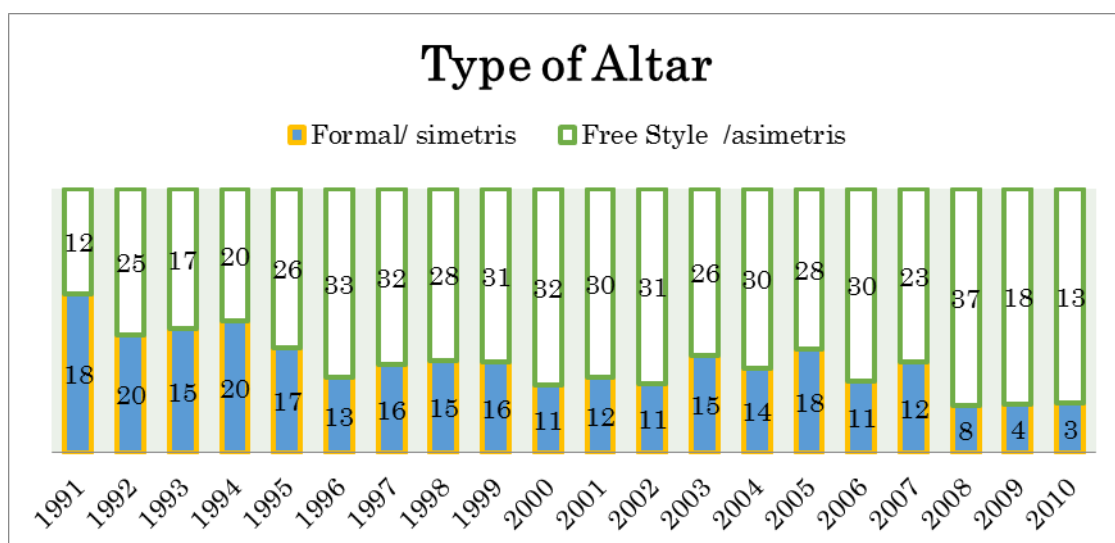




Figure 33. Free style Altar (

In the funeral of Akiko Toyama Sacho, since he liked to play golf, the altar was shaped like a golf course. When Fujiko F. Fujio (the creator of Doraemon) died, there were many pictures of Doraemon on the *Saidan*. And also in many of the funeral ceremonies of business leaders, there were symbols of their companies displayed on the altar.

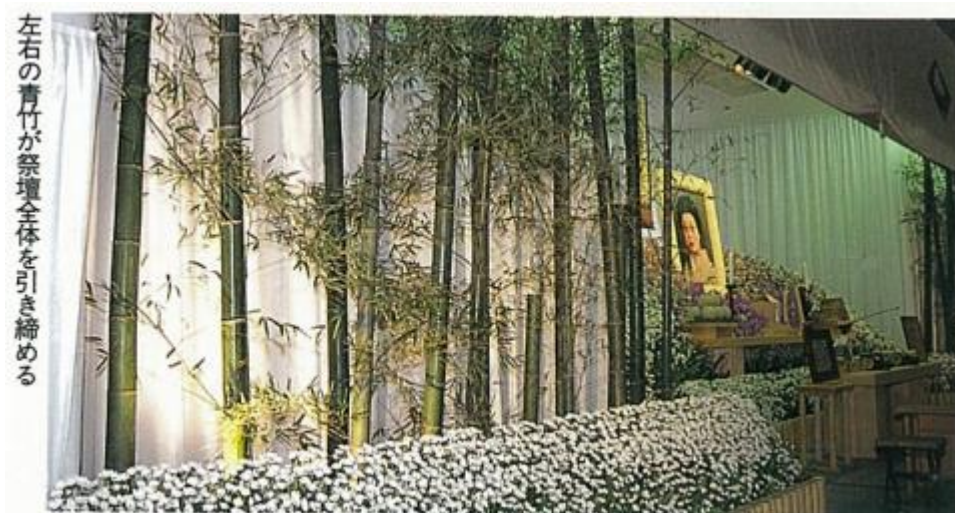


Figure 34. Free style Altar with bamboo (Sogi, March 1998 Vol.8 No.2)

In the funeral of Kinuya Satoyo (86), the *saidan* was not as formal as the usual *saidan*. Rather than being formal, the *saidan* in this funeral was “natural”, as there were bamboo trees displayed around the *saidan*.





Figure 35. Altar with many goods relate to profession of the deceased

Another example: there were beers and lighting equipments displayed on the altar of Iwabura Miyuki (61), former Shochiku Kabuki-za lighting division manager. The photograph style was also casual, not formal.



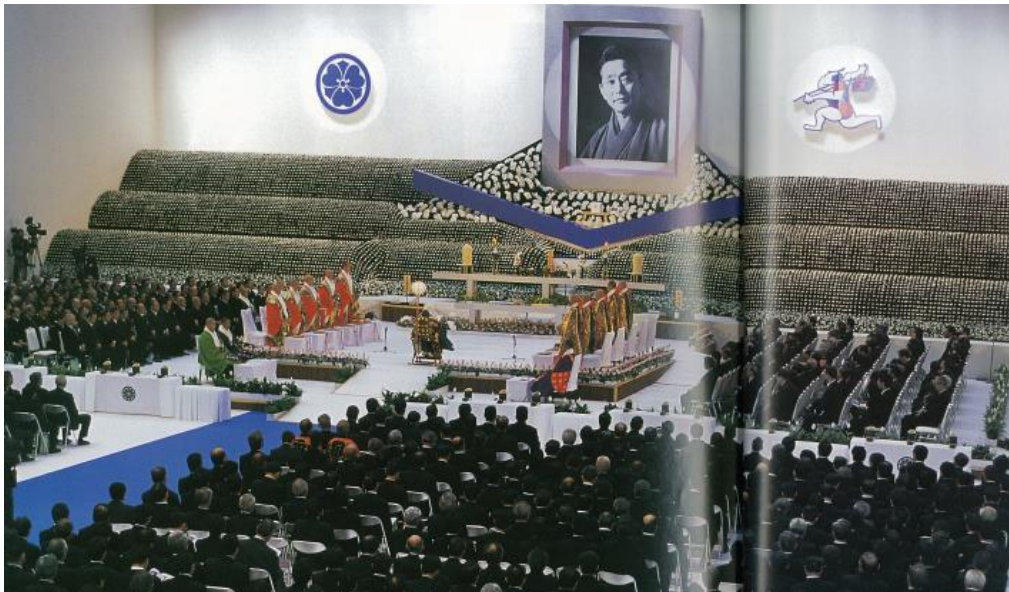
Figure 36. Altar with two photograph for the same person.

In the special cases of kabuki artists' funerals, there were two photographs on the altar: the true face and the character the deceased portrayed as a kabuki artist. In the funeral of Nakamura Utememon (86), one piece was the photograph of his real face, and the other was a picture of him in his stage costume as a woman.



**Figure 37. Altar with Golf course style (Sogi, November 2001 Vol 11.No.6)**

On the altar of Yotsumoto Moriyo (58), there were many golf balls around a life-sized photograph.



**Figure 38. Altar with symbol of the company (Sogi 2001, May 2002 Vol 12 No.3)**

There was a huge altar used in the funeral of Kiyoshi Sagawa (79), the founder of Sagawa Kyubin Company. The altar was 31 meters wide, 5 meters high, and the mark of the Sagawa kyubin Company was displayed beside the deceased.

On the altar, there was a microphone in front of the photograph of Takahashi Keizou (83), an NHK announcer who died in April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2012.





**Figure 39. Altar with “microphone”, the deceased is Announcer NHK**

In the funeral of Kitamura Yoshio (85), chairman of Akbel Group, there were 20,000 ripe blossoms laid on the altar to express nostalgia of the deceased.



**Figure 40. Luxury Altar**



**Figure 422. Altar with logo of Company**



**Figure 42. Free Design Altar**

In the funeral of Ohashi Younosuke (82), the color scheme of the panel company was set up, and the logo of the company was displayed. This panel was decorated with green bamboos and fresh flowers.



**Figure 43. Altar with the big project of Company**

In the altar of Murakami Kiichirou (founder of the Taiyo Shingo Construction), there were many pictures of marine constructions on big ships.

The way to the heavenly world was present on the altar of Kaki Kazuo. This was the funeral before the real death of Mr. and Mrs. Kazuo, the President of Kazuki Fruit and Vegetables. Yellow Carnation on the altar represents the rising sun of their life (SOGi.vol 13. No.2)



#### 4.5. Conclusion

The majority of the deceased (789 persons) whose funerals were published in Sogi magazine (period 1990-2010) were people who died around 75 years of age. Many of them retired from their jobs and society. They prepared their funerals before their death, as a final expression of their death in order to give a happy ending to their funerals. They do their best to plan for their funeral ceremony and to show off their social status. Sometimes, the family of the deceased display various things related to the deceased on the altar. For example, they put a golf stick which is related to the hobby of the deceased. In other cases, they put an image of the favorite car of the deceased. Sometimes they put a microphone to show that the deceased was a journalist. In other instances, they showed the success story of the deceased with slides on the screen. Many businessmen showed their success story with a symbol or logo of their company on the altar. The freedom to express the success story of the deceased in the funeral ceremony seems to increase year by year.

The majority of the deceased who held funeral ceremonies were either business leaders or political leaders. They had wide and powerful influences in the community. They were public figures, so what they did will serve as a role model for the society. Their funeral ceremonies were usually published in the magazine and other media, and became models of other funeral ceremonies.



The changes in funeral ceremonies in Japan, especially in the process of personalization, or *kojinka* (個人化), in the period between 1990-2010, as published in Sogi magazine, appears in two areas: the increasing number of types of funeral ceremonies and the variety of altar models.

Basically, the types of funerals can be categorized into two: *missou* (private funeral) and *honsou* (formal funeral). The development of funeral types is especially present in the *honsou* type. In the *honsou* category, the *shasou* type funeral (group company funeral) is the one which has undergone the most rapid change. The development of a new type of funeral ceremony indicates that the funeral ceremony trend has shifted to a more specific and individualized ceremony.

Based on my observation, the changes in altars over time appear in two important objects: the photograph of the deceased and the style of the altar itself. The photograph of the deceased has shifted from mostly formal style photographs, in the earlier era, to more casual poses in the recent era. Partly due to technological development, the color of the picture of the deceased has mostly shifted from black and white to color photographs. The pose in the photograph has also shifted to a more relaxed one and tends to represent happiness. The photographs used to show the deceased in a formal “straight” pose, but now the photographs mostly show the deceased in a more “tilted” style, sometimes even holding cigarettes or microphones. The visible trend indicates that the freedom in altar styles has improved from the old age of ceremonies, and tends to show the deceased has achieved a “happy ending” in his/her life.

The photograph of the deceased is one of the most important objects on the altar. Of all of photos of the deceased (789 person) that I have observed, they all looked alive and happy. None of them looked sad and dispirited. Hajime Himonya, editor chief of SOGI magazine stated, “Simplified funerals or ceremonies that show personal characters of the deceased have clearly spread.” As a result, funerals that make it easier for participants to recall the deceased have become the mainstream. Some people are taking photos while they are alive, apparently hoping to show themselves in the best light at their own funerals. However, Himonya also added, “Making bereaved family members choose a photo also has an important meaning. It allows them to recall fond memories of the deceased by turning over the albums.”(Asahi Shinbun, 2010/02/15, Picture-perfect funerals all part of the service, Nanako Shibata).

My research uses the data of funeral ceremonies published in SOGI magazine over a period of 20 years (1991-2010). On average, the ages of the deceased, when they died, were around 72 years. In other words, they were mostly born around the 1940s. They were considered the generation that built the foundation of Japanese industry and economy and were responsible for the rapid development of Japanese technology. They wanted something to reflect their hard work and success in impressive funeral ceremonies.

They are the generation that experienced the bubble economy, i.e. the time when Japanese economy grew very rapidly, resulting in a high demand for employees from the companies. This partly caused the relationship between community members to loosen, and the sense of individuality was heightened instead. This particular sense of individuality was especially present in the funeral ceremony, especially in the appearance of the Altar. For example, when a radio announcer died, they put a microphone on the altar to represent the life of work of the deceased. In the funeral of a golf player, the decoration of the altar tends to reflect the golf field. This display of “personalization” sends a message that anything can be done by someone who has sufficient money to express his life’s experiences. However, the freedom is not an absolute one since there are still cultural values to obey. Otherwise, the funeral ceremony would just be a common “organized event.”



## V. Expensive Funerals and Profit of Death: An Ethnography at Belca Funeral Company

### 5.1. Introduction

One evening in October 2009 when I was going to sleep, I received a phone call from the boss of the funeral company that just hired me as an employee. He said that three people had just died, and he received a fax that said the funeral ceremony would be held by Belca<sup>11</sup> – the funeral company. Moreover, he told me that, as a new employee, I have to go to work the next day. I was just worried about what I could do as a new employee. At that time it was late at night, but as I promised my boss during the interview, my cell phone was on standby for twenty-four hours a day. This was so that I could be able to go to work whenever an order comes in.

At 6:50 the next day at work, I was washing dishes that were used at the funeral on the previous day, wearing my work clothes. Both the Belca Izumi branch and the Belca Shiogama branch were equipped with tableware that could accommodate 120 mourners. Each person uses 13 dishes and a small tea bowl to eat a set of treats, so I had to wash around 1,500 dishes and bowls in total. Moreover, I had to dry the tableware and return it to the shelf properly within 2 hours. From 9:30, I washed dishes again and did preparations for *otsuuya*<sup>12</sup> that are waiting.

It was a rather busy day. Three people had passed away; one was in Shiogama branch, and the other two were in Izumi branch. Therefore, my work, after finishing the dishwashing, was preparing for the *otsuya*. Meals for the *otsuuya* consisted of 18 sets which were separately served in 3 rooms. The *meals* are divided into a set of tempura, a set of beef slices, a set of crab and egg custard, a set of oyster and pork cutlet, and a set of dessert.

I was given a role in making 18 sets of tempura. Each set had five prawns, potatoes, eggplants, blue peppers, and pumpkins. Therefore, I had to fry 450 tempura pieces in less than two hours deep because the break started from 12 o'clock. In addition to tempura, I had to make fried oysters, small dumplings, and French fries in each set, or 270 pieces in total. Shrimp tempura was the most difficult of these dishes. I felt it was tough for me to do something I had never done before. Moreover, in the meal served by a funeral company, the tempura dish must be perfect. Tempura at a funeral business is much more expensive than a

<sup>11</sup> Belca is the pseudonym of Funeral Company in Sendai, where I did field work for 10 months.

<sup>12</sup> *tsuya* (通夜) lit. "necine the night". All funeral guests wear black: men wear black suits with white shirts and black ties, and women wear either black dresses or black kimonos.

tempura dish in an ordinary restaurant. That day I made all the tempura using two tempura saucepans.

During the break at 12 o'clock, all employees stopped their work and ate lunch together. The lunch was prepared by the company. Lunch was already drawn up on a cold stainless steel desk; it was all prepared by the employees. After all the meals had been prepared, the chairs in the room were arranged based on the order of each person's rank. The boss was at the edge of the table; the next was the assistant, and then me; finally, there was a woman who had worked there for one or two years. When I started eating lunch, the telephone rang. New information had come in from the upper floor. We were told that there was a change in the number of reservations. The number of mourners at the Izumi branch had changed from thirty to twenty-eight people. After receiving the phone call, the boss complained that the change in the reservation was done very late in the day since all the tables had already been properly set. However, the female employee just smiled. I could not understand why they were laughing with joy.

During my first time eating lunch at the company, I did not feel comfortable because of the flower bouquet and coffin that I could see in the funeral home. Those things made it feel like being at a funeral. Apparently, the boss seemed to understand my concern and said that I would get used to it eventually. The foods on the desk were also expensive, such as crabs from Hokkaido, *toro* sushi, sweet red bean, tempura, fruits, vegetables, and so on. But I did not have much appetite then. However, all the other employees had eaten all the dishes. Another order came in at the end of the lunch. It was a reservation to raise a funeral two days later. The boss took off his spectacles and told me that it was unbelievable. Then he looked at a calendar after checking the details of the reservation to confirm whether the following Tuesday was available or not. The boss murmured "O kasii naa", and at the same time the female employee answered, "What happened?" It seemed that Tuesday was a *tomobiki*.<sup>13</sup> On this day, Japanese people cannot conduct a funeral. However, after confirming with the receptionist, there was no mistake in the reservation. The receptionist informed the boss that the family of the deceased was busy and it seemed that they could only raise a funeral on that particular day.

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<sup>13</sup> Tomobiki (友引) In Japan, it is one of the famous calendar in the calendar, and it is often described in general calendars and notebooks. Today's influence also in Japan, such as "wedding ceremony is great," "funeral is avoiding friendship", etc. are mainly used in conjunction with ceremonies such as ceremonial occasions.

After having lunch, there was a short break. And then we had some preparation work that had to be finished by 15:00. Thirty minutes before 15:00, it was time for checking if all orders had been properly filled. Any mistakes that arise would be taken care of. The first thing to be made sure was if the order for the Izumi branch was not confused with the order for the Shiogama branch. In the meantime, at exactly 16:00 all items ordered were placed on a lift and brought from the third floor to the lower floor. As the door of the lift opened, there was a strong smell of the incense which stung the nose suddenly. At the same time, preparations for the funeral were in progress on the third floor. A woman stopped me while I was finishing cleaning all the appliances. "Mr. Hariyadi, this order was leftover, so I brought it for you, please give it to your child later." I did not know what to answer. When it was lunch time I had no appetite, and I also could not take the food home. I made a happy face and nodded while receiving it. When the order was changed, and the boss was complaining, I know, now, why the employees were glad. I wrapped it up a little and passed by the altar and went back. I picked a chrysanthemum flower from the funeral the previous day and took it home.

On the train ride home, I sat opposite some house wives who looked like they had just shopped for household goods. I caught them glancing at me a few times. "Something is strange" I thought to myself. They were looking at me over and over again. I felt bad. Was there something wrong with me? I listened carefully to their conversation; apparently, it was because of the smell of incense stuck to my clothes. In Japan, the smell of incense is always associated with the dead.

I gradually became used to the atmosphere as I worked at the funeral hall after two months. I felt no resistance to eating the food made for the funeral on the stainless steel table, and I was even able to throw some jokes around while working. Meanwhile, the family of the deceased was shedding tears at the second floor. That day after I finished my work I did not go straight home; instead, I went to a real estate agent to find out if there was a cheap apartment available around the neighborhood. When I was talking, the real estate agent asked me where I was working. While pulling a chair up, I put a chrysanthemum flower on the table and said that I was working at a funeral company. The real estate agent is seeming to have already passed sixty, asked me: "Where did you bring that flower from?" I told her that I took it from the garbage can in the funeral hall, without hesitation. Seeing her sudden dramatic

change in attitude, I tried to be nicer to her. I offered her the food that my female coworker gave me from the funeral home. Then the real estate agent became even more scared than before. When I recommended the food to her, she said "Nagete !" while backing off from me. That meant "trash it," in Sendai dialect. But I told her there is no problem with this food.

After working for four months in the funeral company, everything had changed. I did not feel any difference between the food that I ate at a restaurant, and the food ate at the funeral hall; so, I could then take the rest of the food to my friends without any hesitation. Unlike the real estate woman, my coworker eats the remains of the funeral food without any guilty feelings. My friend was a Japanese born in the 1990s, and coincidentally the 1990s were also when the funeral business began to grow.

This story just shows a dramatic change that occurred in terms of funeral business development in Japan between the old and the young generations. The young generation is not strongly concerned with the religious regulations that the previous generations adhered to. In this paper, I would like to study the change in the practice of the funeral ceremony.

If you hear the word "death," what is the first thing that crosses your mind? Most people are afraid of death, and they keep trying to avoid it. In many countries, including Japan, death is something that is considered "dirty;" a controversial topic that continues even until today. My research plan focuses on death as a sacred object that is also a business, as well as the view that death is "dirty". As has been widely known, the funeral ceremony business in Japan grew significantly after the Second World War to become a huge business with a very high level of profit. *Look Japan* magazine (2002)<sup>14</sup> noted that the profit rate of this business reached 30%, well above the general businesses in Japan. According to research by the Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry, regarding the specific service industry, the number of funeral companies in Japan reached 4,107 companies that are involved in 710,402 transactions. The sales figures are 891 billion yen.<sup>15</sup>

Social and cultural changes that emerged with the transition from the community funeral by *kumi* society to the commercial ceremony by funeral companies (*sougi kaisha*) have been analyzed by Suzuki Hikaru<sup>16</sup> in her dissertation. Furthermore, she concluded that

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<sup>14</sup> *Look Japan* *Look Japan* was established in 1953 (レック ジャパン), an English language magazine published from [Japan](#). It was created to introduce Japanese culture to expatriate foreigners who were unfamiliar with the country

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.meti.go.jp/english/statistics/tyo/tokusabizi/result/pdf/2005k-e/h17-gai-09.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Hikaru Suzuki, *McFunerals : The Transition of Japanese Funerary Services Asian*

the transition from community rituals to commercial ceremonies does not appear as a polar opposition, but instead as a part of the process of modernization (Hikaru 2000). However, in the economic crisis era, many clients of funeral companies complained about the price of ceremony services. In a 2007 survey in Tokyo, it was noted that according to many respondents regarding the service price of funeral ceremonies, the Japanese funeral is the most expensive in the world. Japanese funerals cost nearly \$30,000 on average, higher than comparable figures of \$4,500 in The United States and \$1,800 in England.<sup>17</sup>

In this paper, using my fieldwork data, I aim to establish how expensive is the price of a funeral in a case study in Miyagi prefecture. This paper was based on ten months of fieldwork at Bellca Funeral Company, Izumi Branch, Sendai (October 2008-July 2009). I will explain the situations and conditions within the funeral company, with the main focus on my research question (i.e. “why the prices of funeral ceremonies are so expensive?”). In my research, I want to explore how the funeral industry in Japan plays a significant role in cultural transformation, shifting from “*kumi* society” to “funeral business society,” and how they are continuing to develop as a cultural revolution, especially in an economic crisis.

For a long time, economics has supported a secularized view of the world. However, when economists write about religious phenomena, they all too often view the phenomenon as a religious one, instead of trying to show it as an economic one. Most economic studies on religious phenomena have not had secular focuses. This is the point that the horizon of my study tries to open up. In this particular study, religion is seen as part of the service industry in contemporary Japanese socio-economic structure. Religion is integrated into the service sector with other occupational groups such as advertising businesses, broadcasting, social welfare businesses, academic research institutions, political/economic/cultural associations, car repairing businesses, disposal businesses, education, medical institutions, car park businesses, and so forth. I want to analyze the funeral ceremony from two perspectives: first, I analyze from the viewpoint of business science, and second I analyze with religious science.

## 5.2. Fieldwork

There are two terms of funerals in Japan; *kumi* society and funeral business society (Hikaru, 2000). “*Kumi* society” is a community of Japanese society, especially in village areas before the Second World War, in which, when a member of the community dies, the entire community is responsible for conducting a funeral ceremony. Every member does it as

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<sup>17</sup> Look Japan magazine, September 2002

a volunteer, and they don't receive money. In return, every member receives service from the community when one of their family members die. It looks like a reciprocal relationship. The funeral business society is the society in which all of the tasks of the community members are replaced by the funeral company. And each member pays this company for funeral service provided.

In the early period after the war, the funeral industry began to flourish due to the help of mutual aid cooperatives (*gojokai*). Funeral and wedding mutual aid cooperatives were first discovered in Yokosuga in 1948 by Nishimura Kamahiko (Kankon Sosai Gojokai Renmei Zenkoku 1974, 34). The company's name was Weddings and Funerals Yokosuga City mutual aid cooperative (Yokosugashi Kankon Sosai Gojoka), which originated from his desire to take over the cemetery duties of members of in the type of communities that had begun to fade. Furthermore, Nishimura expected a huge business opportunity in terms of weddings and funerals. Most Japanese people faced economic difficulties after the war and problems in overcoming the funeral expenses to be paid in cash.<sup>18</sup>

In Japan, there are 3 types of funeral ceremony companies (Kankonshoshai): *Sogisha*, *Gojyokai*, and *Sonota*. *Sogisha* is the funeral ceremony company that was established for the first time in 1887. *Gojyokai* is the funeral company in which every customer is also a member of the club in the enterprise. And *Sonota*, is a funeral company that was built by various kinds of association, such as Japan Agriculture, etc. The explanation of this division can be seen in the picture below.

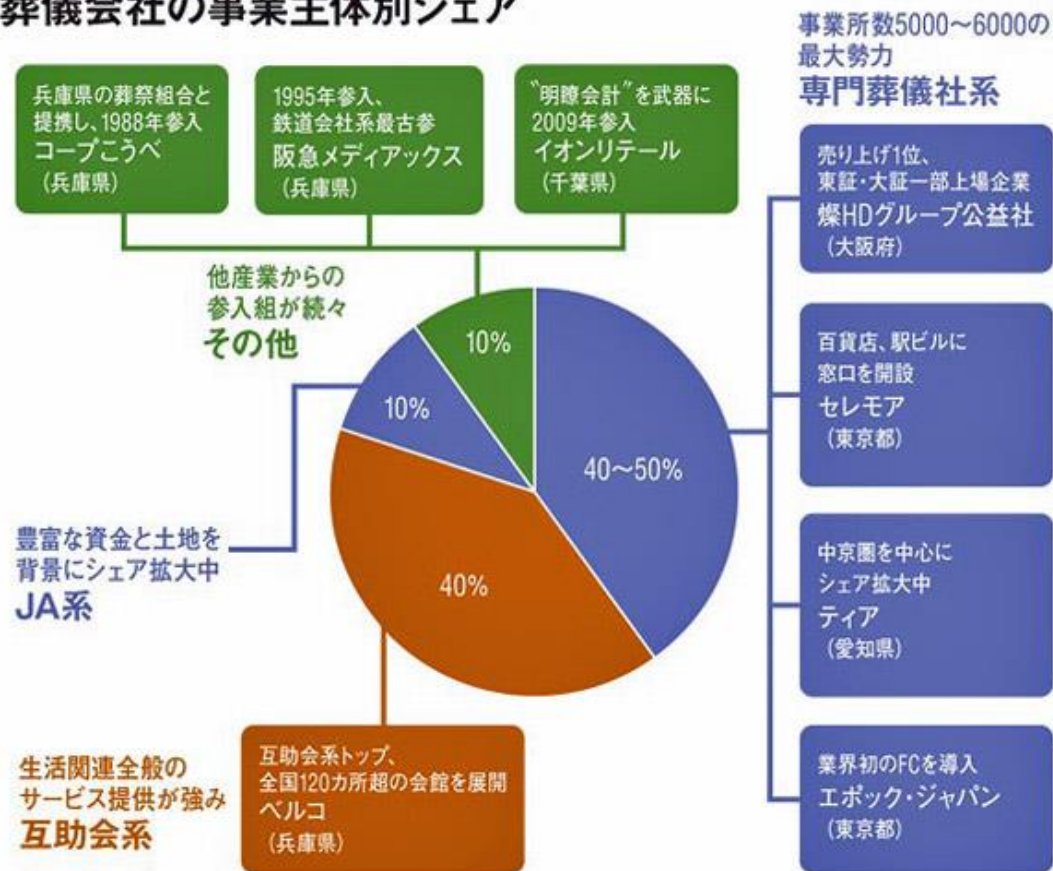
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<sup>18</sup> Hikaru Suzuki The Price of Death: The Funeral Industry in Contemporary Japan, p 54  
i

(image source:葬儀：施行件数は今後 30 年間増加、異業種からの参入も相次ぐ)

X

## 葬儀会社の事業主体別シェア



葬儀会社の事業主体別シェア (2011年時点)

Figure 1. Classification of Funeral Company

(image source:葬儀：施行件数は今後 30 年間増加、異業種からの参入も相次ぐ)

Bellca Funeral Company is the funeral company under the *Gojokai*<sup>19</sup> scheme. Members of the mutual aid (*Gojokai kaiin*) will also be prospective customers when they fill out a membership card to prepare for the two big ceremonies in their lives. There are various ceremonies in a person's life. Among them, wedding and funeral are said to be the two major ceremonies which are also the most costly.

<sup>19</sup> *Gojokai* is a mutual-aid cooperative relies on its members' deposit, in which each member (*gojokai kaiin*) has to pay starting from the time they fill out the application form.





Figure 2. Map of Bellca Funeral Hall



Figure 3 Bellca Funerall Hall ,Izumi,Sendai

The Bellca Company, headquartered in Osaka, is a group company with more than 300 branches throughout Japan. Since its founding in 1969, Bellca has been serving a number of their members' wedding ceremonies and funerals, i.e. the two big ceremonies of life. (冠婚葬祭)

The base spread from Hokkaido to Kyushu with the help of ceremonial funerals and started around a part of what is now Hyogo prefecture, supporting members' important days all over Japan. Bellca is the largest in terms of size and the number of facilities held by mutual aid associations across the country. It has more than 2 million members nationwide. Some of the facilities belonging to Bellca throughout Japan include Hotel Bell classic(1), Wedding ceremony Bell classic (34), Wedding chapel(6), costume salons (14), and multipurpose halls (184). According to its 2009 report, Bellca served more than 35,000 funerals yearly.

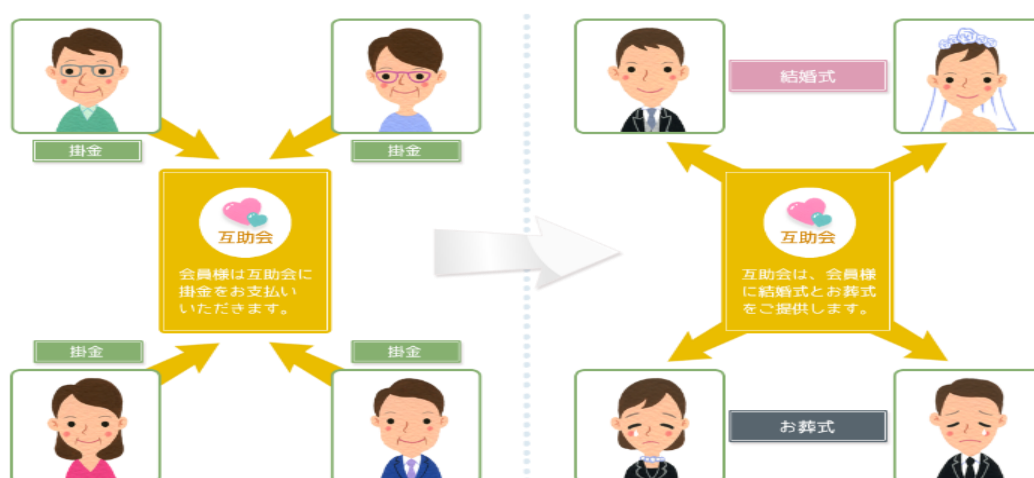


Figure 4. . Payment System with Gojokai (<https://www.bellco.co.jp/philosophy/>)

This is the mechanism of "mutual aid" that enables members to help each other in preparation for expenses. In order to prepare for these two major ceremonies, "mutual benefit society" was born from the spirit of mutual aid between members. Even if each deposit is small, a great assurance is created by gathering many members. There are more than 2 million members of Bellca throughout Japan.

Bellca's mutual assistance society prepares various plans to reduce the burden of expenses by preparing for them as soon as possible. In *gojyokai* programs at Bellca, each member pays dues of 3,000 yen per month for 200 months. And in the event of death, the member only pays 556,500 yen to receive a ceremonial service equal to the original price 1,020,315 yen if the deceased was not a member of *gojyokai*.

The ceremonial occasion mutual aid association is operated as a "prepaid-type specified trading business" under the installment sales law because it is a business that collects down payment (monthly premium) regularly from members. "Ceremonial funerary mutual aid association" is under the permission of the Minister of Economy, Trade, and Industry, and the business license is given only to those who satisfy stringent criteria through examination. Bellca received the "Minister of Economy, Trade, and Industry No. 5006" as a permission owner of "Mutual Association," and has become the largest in the whole country.

The national average of the cost of a funeral is around 2.5 million yen. Funeral expenses can be roughly divided into three categories: funeral settlement, food and drink entertainment expenses, and payment to religious people.

## The Price of Funeral Ceremony

お葬式の値段

葬儀社への支払い	全国平均 151万円	80万円～400万円の幅。 原価40%と言われる
飲食接待料	全国平均 39万円	通夜、火葬後飲食など
寺院関係費用	全国平均 49万円	読経、お布施、 戒名料など
計)	全国平均 239万円	—
<small>(会葬者人数、葬儀方法、地域格差により大幅あり。2003年調査)</small>		

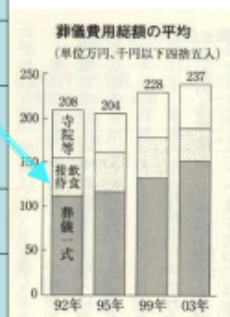
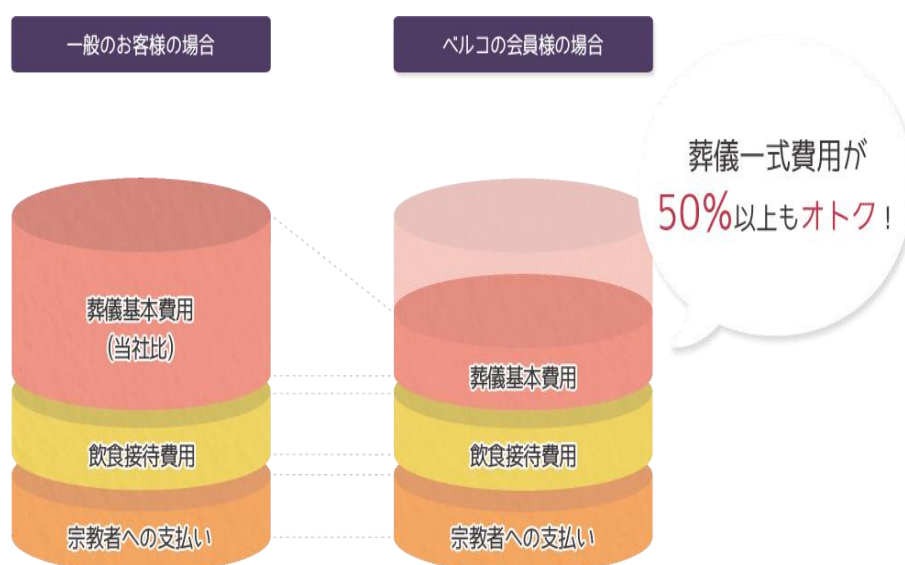


Figure 5 . The Price of Funeral

The funeral settlement covers costs of altars, coffins, sleeping cars, ceremonial facilities, and so on, including items that are absolutely necessary for the funeral practice. There are grades of quality in the altars, coffins, etc., and the amount of money varies widely depending on the type of altar. Bellca's quotation system calculates the total cost after presenting the detailed amount for each item. Professional staff will plan a funeral to suit the budget of the user, including the cost of the entertainment dishes that are served after the funeral ceremony at night and the return gifts. Food and beverage entertainment expenses vary according to the number of mourners and the contents of the meal; it occupies approximately 20 to 30% of the total cost. The payment to religious people is the cost of asking monks to read sutra and depends greatly on sects and churches. If the deceased had an affiliation with religion or sect, the funeral professionals would provide the arrangements for the monks.

Figure 6 . Composition of Funeral Ceremony Cost (<https://www.bellco.co.jp/philosophy/>)

ご葬儀お見積書		
項目名	商品名	一般さま価格
祭壇	白木祭壇	500,000円
親族一同花	3万	30,000円
祭壇花	3万	30,000円
遺影写真	カラー額 (シルバー)	42,000円
エンゼルフラワー	あり	70,000円
御棺	スワン	100,000円
湯濯またはエンバークミンク	エンバークミンク	180,000円
ドライアイス	10kg	8,000円
仏衣	えにし	15,000円
消臭関係	コットンフラワー	12,000円
骨壺	骨壺セット (白)	8,000円
寝台車	あり	12,230円
霊柩車	B級ランク	36,300円
出棺バス	あり	33,000円
骨上バス	あり	33,000円
通夜礼状	50枚セット	15,000円
会葬礼状	50枚セット	15,000円
通夜供養	キーコーヒー ドリップオン	105,000円
当日供養	ジバンシー フェイスタオル	105,000円
通夜料理	6人分7品	30,000円
朝食 (お斎)	なし	0円
精進上げ	懐石10000円	50,000円
精進上げ (子供用)	なし	0円
駐車場誘導整備料		20,000円
※		

葬儀一式費用

飲食接待費用

宗教者への支払い

- ・読経料
- ・戒名料など

※お見積りには記載されません

Figure 7 . Funeral Cost Quotation (<https://www.belco.co.jp/philosophy/>)

The cost of funeral ceremonies is on average 2 million yen. But Belca offers a contract plan for members that can reduce the "set funeral fee" considerably (30% to 50% depending on the plan) compared to ordinary customers. The contract plan of Belca starts from a convenient amount of 2,000 to 3,000 yen monthly. It is a plan that can prepare for a large expense at a small monthly cost.

During my 10 months fieldwork at Belca Izumi branch in Sendai, I was placed on the food & drinks division for funerals. Belca Izumi also serves Belca Shiogama. There are several departments within Belca Izumi: building management department, handling of dead bodies department, funeral arrangements with the customer, and the altar decorations. My department offers to prepare meals for the wake (*otsuya*) and the funeral ceremony (*soushiki*). My main responsibility was to cook tempura and sashimi and to prepare the dish on the trolley (*moritsuke*) before it was brought to the ceremonial room.

## 2. フィールドワーク

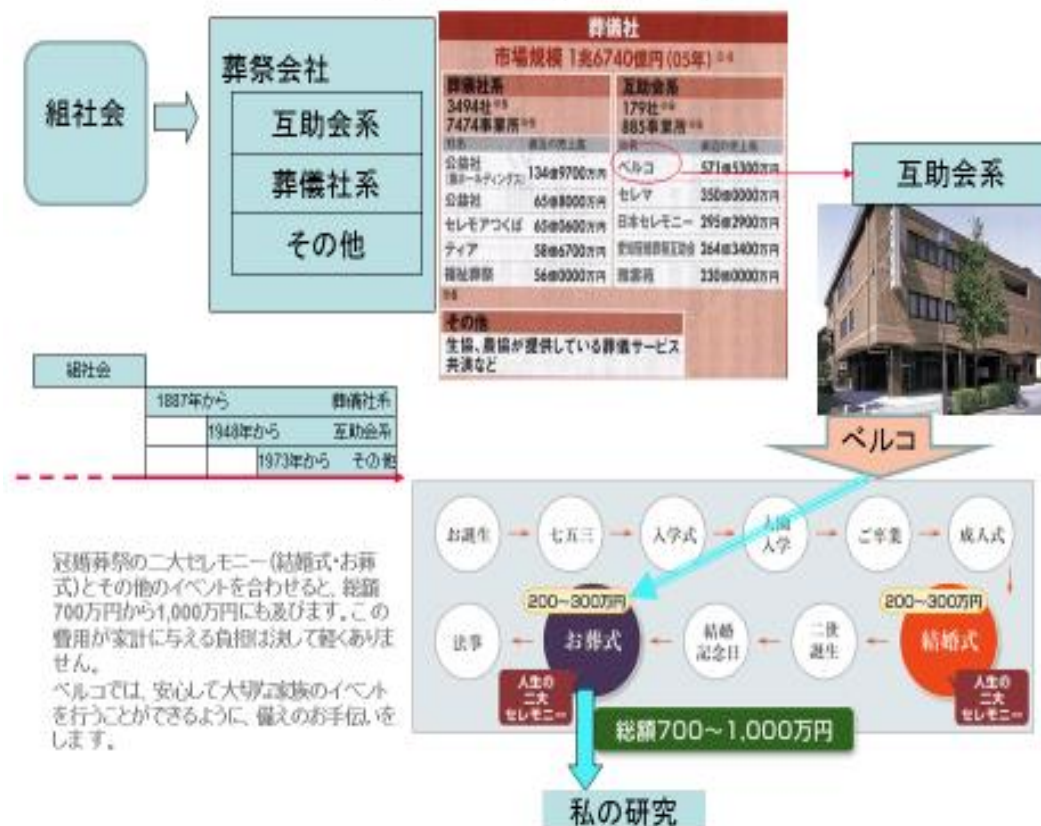


Figure 8 . Scheme of Field work in Bellca Funeral Company, Sendai.

さら	通夜内容	ねだん (円)		
		普通のレス トラン	+ α	葬儀 会社
1	すし			
2	お新香			
3	天ぷら			
4	デザート			
5	とんかつ			
6	ぐらたん			
7	牛肉			
8	ポテトフライ			
9	かきフライ			
会計		10.000		21.000

さら	葬式内容	ねだん (円)		
		普通の レス ト ラン	+ α	葬儀 会社
1	茶碗蒸し			
2	お新香			
3	ご飯			
4	焼き魚			
5	ジュース			
6	イカ			
7	刺身			
8	デザート			
会計		2.500		7.000

Table 1 . The price and contents of the Soushiki and otsuya menu



The food presented in *otsuya* and the food in *oshosiki* are different. In *otsuya*<sup>20</sup>, the food is presented in sets that contain *sushi*, *osinko*, tempura, dessert, *tonkatsu*, strokes, *gyu sashi*, potato fry, and fried egg. Each set is for 5 seats, meaning that one set is for 5 guests. For example, as shown in the picture, the paper bill has the orders booked on 22-10-2009 *otsuya* for October 23<sup>rd</sup> at 18:00. The 5 sets of food can cost as much as 21,000 yen / set. The 5 sets also indicate that there are 25 mourners in the *otsuya*

料理発注書 21.10.22 日  
ちさか 御中  
葬式 西條内山  
葬式 西條内山  
届け先 CH 土佐金 TIL  
通夜 10月23日 18時00分  
品名 金額 数量 追加数 追加数 追加数  
通夜オードブル ¥21000 5  
助六寿司 ¥  
朝食 10月24日 7時30分 届け  
金額 数量 追加数 追加数 追加数  
¥10500  
告別 10月24日 13時00分  
会食時間 14時30分  
品名 金額 数量 追加数 追加数 追加数  
助六寿司 ¥6300 5  
¥  
2. 8000 730 X

複数・その他の  
お仕事  
複数職種・複数勤務地、その他の雇用形態などの募集  
26826  
下記参照 ※①契約社員 ②③パート  
①月給150,000~200,000円 ②③時給800円 ※すべて研修期間2~3ヶ月有  
JR仙台駅より徒歩5分  
職種 ①葬祭業務全般施行スタッフ  
②冠婚葬祭セレモニアシスタント  
③テレフォンアポインター  
資格 ①未経験者歓迎・要普免  
勤務地 ①仙台市宮城野区/JR仙台駅より徒歩5分  
勤務 ①9:00~17:00  
②③10:00~16:00  
休日 ①隔週休2日制  
給与 ①月給150,000~200,000円  
②③時給800円  
※すべて研修期間2~3ヶ月有  
待遇 ①交通費一部支給  
応募 ①電話連絡の上、履歴書(写真貼付)持参  
下さい。お気軽にお問い合わせ下さい。  
※面接随時  
PR ①20~30代にかけてのスタッフが  
頑張っています。  
やりがいのある仕事です。  
お電話お待ちしております！  
冠婚葬祭  
ベルコ 広報東代理店  
〒983-0852 仙台市宮城野区榴岡1-6-37  
TMビル403  
☎(022)256-1711 ☎090-5839-7829 担当/稲葉  
一般労働者派遣(般13-304279)、有料職業紹介事業(13-ユ-303951)

Figure 9 . The Form order for Otsuya and osoushiki meal      Figure 10 .Addverstasment

<sup>20</sup> a Japanese wake is called *tsuya* (通夜), is "passing the night". All funeral guests wear black: men wear black suits with white shirts and black ties, and women wear either black dresses or black kimonos.



Figure 11 . Meal for Otsuya

The funeral ceremony (*oshoushiki* <sup>21</sup>) meal is presented on a plate one by one. The funeral ceremony meal contains rice, *cawanmushi*, *yakisakana*, *osinko*, juice, *ika*, and sashimi. Based on the *oshoushiki* paper order, it was held a day after the *otsuya*, or in 24/10/2009 at 13:00; the amount of food ordered was 30 portions, with prices being 7,000 yen / person. The contents of the menu are usually standardized for each ceremony. There is a difference in how to present the funeral ceremony meal in the winter, summer, autumn and spring. In the autumn, the meal is decorated (*moritsuke*) with a maple leaf, and in the spring, the meal is usually decorated with sakura flowers. The winter and summer meals are distinguished by the napkin that is printed with a picture that expresses summer or winter. When I asked my boss why the decoration must be distinguished, the answer was to make it easier to remember that the deceased had died in that particular season. There are two levels of prices for a meal for *osoushiki* in Bellco, i.e. 7,000 yen / person and 8,000 yen / person. The difference is in the tempura and *gyu sashi*. For the 8,000 yen / person meal, the ebi tempura is substituted by kani tempura, and there is more *gyu sashi* than the usual set.

According to the field survey data, the price of a meal for the funeral and wake (*otsuya*) is more high than a usual restaurant. There is a difference compared to the price of

<sup>21</sup> A Japanese funeral (葬儀 *sōgi* or 葬式 *sōshiki*) is usually on the day after the wake. The procedure is similar to the wake, and incense is offered while a priest chants a sutra. The ceremony differs slightly as the deceased receives a new Buddhist name (戒名, *kaimyō*; lit. "precept name") written in Kanji.



meals in normal restaurants. In this study, I want to analyze some factors that cause the high price difference (プラス  $\alpha$ ).



Figure 12. Meal for Osoushiki

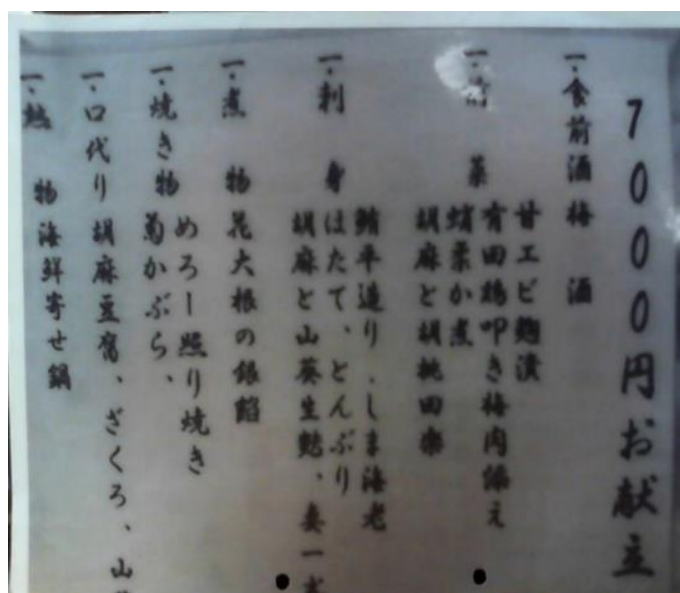


Figure 13 . Price of Meal for Osoushiki

### 5.3. Analysis

As mentioned in previous chapters, scholars are generally reluctant to speak about the relationship between business and religion. They believe that it would be inappropriate to talk about the business behind the religious symbols. This area is considered sacred, causing objective analysis to be difficult. My analysis in this paper involves discussion from both perspectives of the funeral, i.e. the business and religion sides.

#### 5.3.1. Business Analysis

To analyze the price of an expensive funeral ceremony, I use the Porter Theory<sup>22</sup> and the meaning of “goods” theory. by Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood.<sup>23</sup>

##### 5.3.1.1. Porter Theory

Five forces Porter's theory is a framework theory for industry analysis and business strategy, developed by Michael E. Porter of Harvard Business School. The Five Forces are the threat of the entry of new competitors, the intensity of competitive rivalry, the threat of substitute products or services, the bargaining power of customers (buyers), and the bargaining power of suppliers.



マイケル・ポーターのファイブフォース分析とは、

業界の収益性を決める5つの競争要因から、業界の構造分析をおこなう手法である (Porter, 1998)。ファイブフォースとは「供給企業の交渉力」「買い手の交渉力」「競争企業間の敵対関係」という3つの内的要因と、「新規参入業者の脅威」「代替品の脅威」の2つの外的要因、計5つの要因のことで、これらから業界全体の魅力度を測ることを目的としている。次章ではこの分析手法で考察してみたい。

Figure 14 . Five Force Porter Theory

<sup>22</sup> **Porter's five forces analysis** is a framework that attempts to analyze the level of competition within an industry and business strategy development. It draws upon industrial organization (IO) economics to derive five forces that determine the competitive intensity and therefore attractiveness of an Industry. This analysis is associated with its principal innovator Michael E. Porter of Harvard University.

<sup>23</sup> *The World of Goods* bridges the gap between what anthropologists know about why objects are desired and what economists say about the specialised topic called consumption behaviour.

Profitable markets that yield high returns will attract new firms. This results in many new entrants, which eventually will decrease profitability for all firms in the industry. The threat of the entry of new competitors in the funeral business market in Japan is influenced by many factors. The existence of “barriers to entry” (patents, rights, etc.) is usually the most effective entry barriers. But in the funeral business in Japan, there is no special rule to establish a new funeral company, so it is very easy to establish one. Anyone can establish a new funeral company without complicated permissions from the governor. The second is access to distribution, meaning how to get customers for the funeral business. To get customer in Japan is not difficult because, in the future, the number of deaths will increase. The third is capital requirements for which, to build this type of business, someone must possess access to large capital. One of the reasons is, in order to get trust from customers, the funeral business must be a big group business. The fourth is customer loyalty towards established brands. This point is very specific to Japanese consumers because, to choose a funeral company, they will be very selective. The fifth is the learning curve. For a newcomer in the funeral business, it 's hard to start because a funeral business is not a usual business; not only is it needed to understand business, but also to have a deep understanding of culture. In conclusion, the threat of the entry barrier to building a funeral business in Japan is not considered significant.

To build a funeral company, someone must have business permission from the Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry after passing a rigorous examination. The ceremonial occasion mutual aid association is operated as a "prepaid-type specified trading business" under the installment sales law because it is a business that collects down payment (monthly premium) regularly from members. "Ceremonial funerary mutual aid association" is under the permission of the Minister of Economy, Trade, and Industry, and the business license is given only to those who satisfy stringent examination criteria conditions. Bellca received the "Minister of Economy, Trade, and Industry No. 5006" as a permission owner of "Mutual Association," and is the largest in the whole country.

The competitive rivalry is intense among funeral ceremony companies. There are many factors that influence it: sustainable competitive advantage through innovation, competition between online and offline companies, the level of advertising expense, and powerful competitive strategy. Competitive rivalry is likely to be based on dimensions such as price, quality, and innovation. Technological advances protect companies from competition. This applies to products and services. Companies that are successful with introducing new technology are able to charge higher prices and achieve higher profits until

competitors imitate them. In the funeral business in Japan, there are many innovations of product and services, for example using dry ice in the ceremony, using laser light, etc.

The threat of substitute products or services means replacing current services/products with new types of services/products. But in the funeral ceremony, there are no services or products to substitute because the funeral ceremony is the only one that is provided as a service for the deceased. And this ceremony is very special since everyone will experience it and is a once-in-a-lifetime occasion for everyone. So the funeral ceremony cannot be replaced by another ceremony.

The bargaining power of customers or buyers means the ability of customers to put the firm under pressure, which also affects the customer's sensitivity to price changes. In the funeral business, customers have a strong position because there are many funeral companies in Japan and information for the buyer is available through any media. In Japan, the customer is not only the King but "*Okyakusama wa Kamisama desu*" customer is a god.

The bargaining power of suppliers is also described as the market of inputs. Suppliers of raw materials, components, labor, and services (such as expertise) to the firm can be a source of power for the firm, when there are few substitutes. Suppliers may refuse to work with the firm, or may charge excessively high prices for unique resources. The suppliers of the Japanese funeral businesses include flower shops, coffin industry, grave land companies, photographers, cars for the deceased, catering, etc. The bargaining power of suppliers is weak in the funeral industry because, in the crisis era, there are many jobless people in Japan.

Death is one of the "life chains" of human life. Therefore, since everyone must experience it, it is only a matter of time. In other words, the demand for these businesses is stable. Japan, with a population of 130 million people, is an aging population that has many social problems. Currently, the percentage of the population aged over 65 years is about one-fifth of the total population. This percentage is forecast to be increasing in future. Estimates by the National Institute of Population and Social Security<sup>24</sup> (December 2006), assuming that the number of births and deaths would be the same as now, stated that the total population in 2023 aged 65 years and over is going to be 30.0%, and in 2052 it will increase to 40.0%. This, in short, results in an increase in the number of deaths and must be anticipated by the funeral ceremony companies each year. The current mortality rate is at 1.3 million people per year. This is the source of the big demand for the funeral business ceremony.

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<sup>24</sup> National Institute of Population and Social Security Research in Japan <http://www.ipss.go.jp/index-e.asp>

In the crisis era (2008), funeral businesses in Japan increased because, year by year, the number of customers of this business also increased. The barrier to entry to build this business is not significant. The intensity of competition among funeral companies fluctuates, but not necessarily in the crisis era. A funeral ceremony cannot be replaced by other services at any time. Although the customers have a strong bargaining power in choosing funeral services, the number of customers of this business increases year by year, so in the crisis era, bargaining power of the customer is not necessarily massive. Especially in customer analysis, the price of the funeral ceremony is very high, but the customer cannot complain because “The dead never complain.” The suppliers of Funeral businesses have weak positions in the funeral business because there are many suppliers from outside of Japan with lower prices. So, based on the analysis by Five Force Porter Theory, funeral ceremony businesses are not to be affected by the economy.

According to my observation at Bellca, I think this business is an unusual business, because the job for the *sogiya* san starts only when a person dies. But the problem is we don't know when death will happen, so there is no fixed working hour. The salary rate in this business is higher than the rates in general restaurants. My salary was 780 yen/ hour, which is more expensive than a salary in a general restaurant (760 yen/hours). Most businesses can predict the customer base and can make a scheduled time of work. But in this business, nobody knows when someone will die and become a customer of the funeral company. When someone dies, the family of the deceased will cry, but the boss of the company will soon have a client.

### 5.3.1.2. The Meaning of “goods.”

In my field research, I found a big difference between the price of a meal at general restaurants and the price at the funeral ceremony in *sougi*. I think the price of a meal for *otsuya* in the usual restaurant is 2,500 yen, but in the funeral ceremony, the price is 7,000 Yen. To understand why it is different, I use the theory of material culture.

In their book, "The World of Goods,"<sup>25</sup> Mary Douglas (anthropologist) and Baron Isherwood (economist) explain what an object means for the human body. From both the

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<sup>25</sup> [Mary Douglas](#), [Baron Isherwood](#). 1996. "The World of Goods": Towards an Anthropology of Consumption. London; Psychology Press,.

standpoint of traditional societies and modern societies, this question can be answered in two ways:

First, objects can be placed in a functional perspective only. In this perspective, a plate serves as a food container, weapons serve as tools for hunting and defending against enemy attacks, as protective steel-toed shoes, and so on. The business or economy phenomenon is included in this perspective.

Second, objects can also be placed in perspective as a totem, which is associated with something else. Here the objects act as carriers of the meaning of certain social traditions. Rings, for example, do not matter in a functional perspective, but the perspective can be meaningful as a totem of beauty, wealth, or a bond of loyalty of the married, and so on.

From a functional perspective, we can understand that the food in *otsuya* and *osoushiki* functions give a sense of satiety, especially after the mourners felt a deep sadness. Sadness drains energy, and usually, people do not want to eat while sad; therefore, in a ceremony the meal is a dish that evokes a person's appetite.

The food in the ceremony in perspective as a totem, or symbol, can be described as a thing that acts as a carrier of the meaning of certain socio-cultural norms. The food is served at a funeral (*jikan teki*/時間的), specifically during the solemnization in the funeral hall (*kuukan teki*/空間的). The funeral service is a situation (activity) which is not always occurring for a person, i.e. only once in a lifetime. In other words, a situation like this is special (in terms of Japanese folklore, it is called the *hi-nichijou*). To attend events like this, all the people prepare special things including food, clothing, and a unique mood.

According to Douglas and Isherwood, consumption of objects in a community also occurs outside the trading activity. Objects could also be a cultural phenomenon which is associated with social values, ethics, and communication. Not only being used for its physical function, but an object could also serve as a symbol of social value in social interaction. This also means that there is a symbolic trade happening in the circulation of objects. Douglas and Isherwood especially analyze ceremonies, both in the traditional and modern community. This is because, they argue, these ceremonies are where the objects attain their non-physical



values, i.e. when it is being used in a ritual. Since the ceremonies serve as the basis for individual classification within the community, the objects involved directly play the role of the source of social identity and class.

In addition, the objects used in the funeral business also fall in this category, which means that rice is not an ordinary religious food. Mc.Cracken (1988) has reported on what is used in rituals in modern society. Mc.Cracken said, as an example of funeral and wedding ceremonies, that when the bride and groom exchange rings on the occasion of engagement, the ring suddenly has a deeper meaning for both parties. That is, if the ring is used in the funeral there would be no special meaning, but if it is used for the wedding ritual, the price may be different.<sup>26</sup>

In my field work, the meal for *otsuya* and *osoushiki* is not the usual meal. Those meals have a big meaning for the deceased. Specially presented at a certain time, served within a specified time, and cannot be served at any other time. There is a short span of time for the corpse to be buried. And the place for the funeral ceremony also provides a farewell ceremony for the deceased in a fully solemn atmosphere. So, this description gives a reason, and explanation, on why the price of funerals are so high.

### 5.3.2. Religious study analysis

Before we analyze the funeral ceremony as a business, we should understand how Japanese people view the concept of death. This is essential due to the fact that the development of the funeral service business depends on the people's viewpoint, and the adjusting of its service accordingly.

#### 5.3.2.1. People with Religious authority control the Fear of Death

In this paper, the subject is an expensive funeral ceremony. While the funeral service itself is the beginning of life after death, death in the Japanese belief was considered "dirty", so it needs to be purified. Purification is performed through funeral ceremonies. After those, every year on the anniversary of a person's death, a small ceremony is held, for safety and festivity, continuously for 33 years, at which time the deceased is believed to have become a god. Number of 33 is chosen because, after 33 years, there would be very few people who would still remember the deceased, so the deceased is thought to have become a god.

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<sup>26</sup> G Mc.Cracken. 1986. "Culture and Consumption: A Theoretical Account of the Structure and Movement of the Cultural Meaning", The Journal of Consumer Research, Culturally Constituted World.

As for the knowledge about life after death in general, Japanese people do not know it very well, and they rely on the authority of the monks. So the monks are the one who holds control over the Japanese people's fears of death.

Several anthropologists such as James G Frazer, Edward Taylor, and Emile Durkheim analyzed funeral rituals to evaluate the progress of culture in the context of the development of revolutionary thinking. Their analysis focused on the fear of death. Before World War 2, Suzuki Hikaru illustrates that the fear of mortality came into dominance in the funeral ceremony as organized by the society of mutual cooperation. But after World War 2, the role of communities in the implementation of funeral ceremonies was taken over by the funeral company.<sup>27</sup> So that the control of the fear of death will be more dominantly held by *sogiya san*. This is a factor of why funerals are so expensive.

#### 5.3.2.2. Funeral Ceremony conducts a collective sentiment to become collective consciousness.

In the event of death, close family members' and neighbors' social sense would be "touched," resulting in the rise of social solidarity in line with the rise of the feeling of mourning along with others. On this matter, anthropologists such as Durkheim, Alfred Radcliffe-Brown dan Bronislaw Malinowski all agree that someone's death causes social solidarity to rise. According to Durkheim, funeral ritual is the unconscious reaction to the death of one of its "group" members, resulting in heartfelt sentiment and strong psychological feeling (Durkheim, 1965). In this shared sentiment, funerals are when mourners can begin gathering and relate cozy, sweet memories shared between each other and the deceased.<sup>28</sup>

The emotional atmosphere like this can happen only once, during a farewell ceremony with the deceased's beloved people. The community members and the close family members would mourn together, which results in the collective sentiment or "collective feeling". Within modern Japanese society, this role is played by *sougisha* companies. So in this situation, control over ceremonial atmosphere is held by the funeral company, including the cost of organizing the ceremonies.

In the emotional situations, sometimes a person is not dominated by common sense, but the feelings dominate all of the decision-making. I see in the movie *Oshoushiki* when the

<sup>27</sup> Suzuki Hikaru, Japanese Death Ritual in Transit: From Household Ancestors to Beloved Antecedents, Journal of Contemporary Religion, 1998

<sup>28</sup> E Durkheim, MS Cladis . 2001 : "[The Elementary Forms of Religious Life](#)". East West Centre Book, The University of Hawaii, Honolulu, Hawaii, 1982.ed. Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965

family of the deceased asked how much of the cost for *Lobos an*. He answered “without any expression on his face, even without opening his sunglasses,” 10 Man yen or 20 man is OK”. So the situation of emotion family of the deceased is controlled by the obosan family of the deceased. And the family of the deceased make own decision in the uncontrol emotion. Therefore, this is the reason there are many complaints from client that the cost of the funeral so expensive. But it is rarely today, because in the modern funeral company. Especially in the Internet Era, all information accessible, including information about the cost of obosan.

### **5.3.2.3. *Kegare* and grief in funeral ritual**

Death is something “dirty”, according to folklorist Gorai Shigeru explains that the source of death pollution derives from the deceased’s body and the soul of deceased (Gorai 1992,1046) . As I wrote in the introduction, I gave the food that I brought back from the Bellca Funeral Company to my Fudosan, and my immediate reaction was telling him he was wasting food. It can be understood that in the concept of impurity, according to Japanese people, death is dirty, and dirty can be contagious. Therefore, whoever comes home from a funeral ceremony is given a little salt that functions as a cleaner.

In this case, Hikaru explained that the concept of impurity (*kegare*) appears when close family and friends, who mourn the deceased, are required to wash their feet with salt and water to rinse off the impurity. If the deceased excretes continuous waste, then the mourners are required to cleanse themselves by religious rituals (*harai* ) by means of water, fire, and salt. When I did my fieldwork in Bellca a Funeral Company, I saw every mourner who came to the Bellca Funeral Hall, they received salt from the funeral hall before returning to their home. The salt which is packaged in paper sachets, size 5x4 cm. This salt is used to purify themselves before entering their house. (see figure 15).

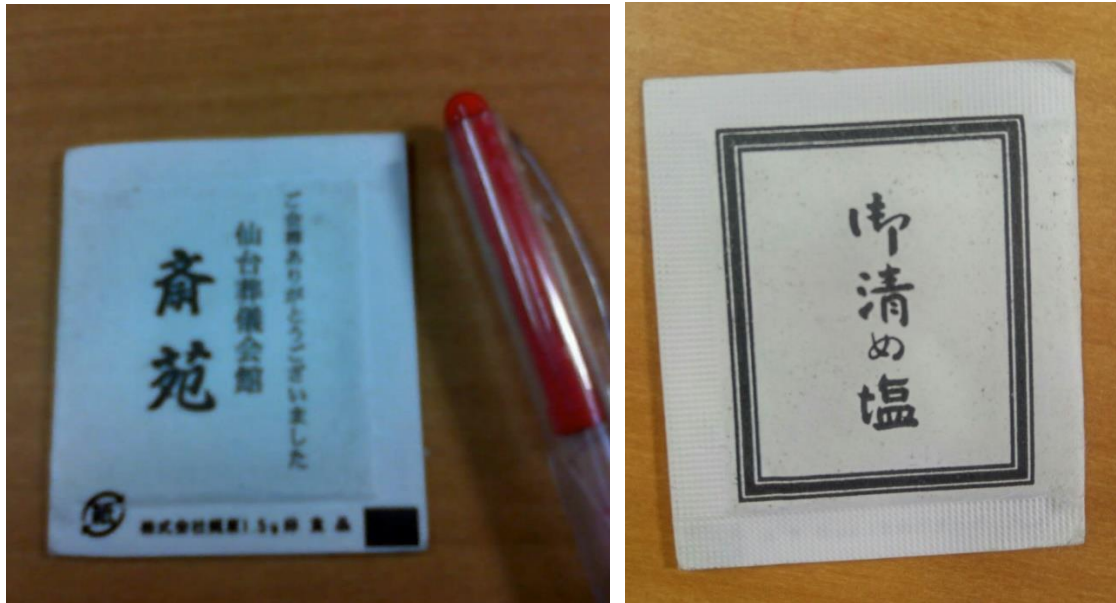


Figure 15. The salt from funeral hall for purification the mourner

The cleansing ritual is performed by rinsing oneself at the seaside, or, if performed at home, applying salt all over the body, and rinsing the body with water (Saito, 106-7). This ritual is also performed by mourners by washing their hands using water, then applying salt after finishing the cremation or funeral ceremony (Gorai 1992, 675; Saito, 100).

Aside from salt, fire is also considered as a "cleanser" for death impurities. This is apparent in the funeral by lighting up incense or candles (Saito, 167-68; Shintani 1992-65). Sake is also considered as having the power to prevent the impurities from adversely affecting the living. Some people drink sake before and after touching the deceased (Gorai, 1992, 712-99.342-44.1010). As can be seen from the funeral ritual manual published by Bellca Funeral Company, these cleansing rituals using either salt still performed even after the industrialisation era.

As stated by Block (1981), "the ritual of funeral ceremony consists of two things: impurity aspect and grief aspect," both of these aspects used to be addressed by all members of the community in the past. In the modern age, these aspects are taken over by the *sougisha*. Judging from the complexity of the rituals, we could understand that it is very difficult for the *sougisha* to make sure that its clients get "happy endings". So it can be understood why the price of a funeral ceremony is so high.

#### 5.3.2.4. Ancestral Worship

The topic of ancestors and ancestral worship is one of the main points of interest for Japanese funeral ritual researchers. This topic is closely related to the Japanese family system (*i.e.*), such as the basic structure of Japanese social framework. The most important question is who are the ancestors is worshiped, and what the characteristics of the worship are.

Ancestral worship has taken its roots in the family system to ensure the continuation of the family name or *myoji* (Akata 1986). Sejalan dengan itu Iwayumi berpendapat keluarga itu seperti pondasi yang memikul tanggung jawab melakukan penyembahan terhadap leluhur. In line with Akata, Iwayumi argues that family as the foundation and has responsibility for the worship of ancestors (Iwayumi, 2004).

Usually, the ancestral worship is closely associated with the Japanese socio-religious aspect, which translates into dedication and continuation of the family system (*i.e.*), not only from the close, mourning family but also the bigger, extended family as a whole (Akata 1986, 1988; Hozumi; Ooms 1967, 19766; Takeda C. 1957, 1979; Tamamuro; Yanagita 1975a). This phenomenon is clearly apparent during a funeral ceremony during which the existence of a family name is displayed during incense lighting, which is performed by one who is closest in relation to the deceased. Lighting the incense (*sooko*) starts from *mosyu*, or the ritual leader (usually the wife or husband of the deceased), then is followed by the rest according to the rank of closeness to the deceased.

There are two separate characteristics (dual characteristics) of the spirit of ancestral worship in Japan: *senzo-kuyo* and *sosen suhai* (Smith, R. 1974, 1976). In *senzo-kuyo*, the spirit is prayed upon for its safe passage, while in *sosen suhai*, the spirit is worshiped. *Senzo kuyo* serves as the symbol of warning and cleansing of the individual spirit, while *sosen suhai* serves as worship to the whole group of worshiped spirits in that particular family (Smith, R. 1976, 61).

The ceremony of death comes from the concept of death being dirty or disgusting because the bodies are considered as a source of defilement and are believed to invite evil spirits due to the fear of graves in this life (Mogami, 1959, 1963). However, in the graves in Japan, the whole body is not buried; instead, only the ashes and bones of the body that were already cremated are buried. Therefore the Japanese cemetery is clean, beautiful, and good for the life or community because of the absence of the bodies that are dirty. From this understanding, it can be understood why the funeral service is very significant for ancestor worship. With regard to this, the experts argue the Japanese fear of ugly death as a reason for

funerals, which can liberate the death of a dirty and ugly nature (Inoguchi, 1965, 190; Haga, 15; Mogami 1963, 170 Shintani, 1991, 232; Takeda C. 1957, 101).

As for the reason why the Japanese need to hold funerals, Suzuki Hikaru argued (in death rituals and Anthropology case 49) that the funeral ceremony is a ritual that emphasizes the view of the Japanese death and displaced spirits at the time of death who later become the ancestors. In another opinion, Harada, for example, claimed that the funeral service was held with a view to strength the worship of the ancestors (Harada, 247-48). Takeda Choshu, furthermore, believed that the funeral was exclusively used as breeding for the souls of recently deceased, while the funeral ceremony was intended as worshipping the ancestors (Takeda C., 1957, 102-5).

If the bereaved family does not perform the funeral ceremony, the deceased are thought not to be able to become ancestors. It is another opportunity for the *sogiya* san to take care of the bodies in order to help them become ancestors.

The grave is the key for people to understand the views of the Japanese public on life after death. Dirtiness, ugliness, or pictures of death to the Japanese society and the changing into ancestral spirits, in the minds of the Japanese, is the life cycle of people. In the cosmology of Japan, *soogiyasan* pay homage to death so that the spirit of the deceased can be transformed from a good spirit into an ancestral spirit, and, by the end, the god of agriculture (Akata 1988; Matsudaira; Nakamura; Ohnuki-Tierny 1993; Yanagita 1975b; Orikuchi 1955a ; Takeda C. 1979; Smith, R. 1974). In addition, the spirit of the deceased is believed to be able to cause harm to the surrounding society, even to relatives left behind, if not taken care of properly. Therefore, rituals need to be performed in order to deliver the spirit to the next life. From this, it can be understood that the importance of the funeral ceremony is believed to accelerate the process of changing the spirit of the deceased into the spirit ancestor or ancestors.

According to the Japanese belief, the dead person will be a god after 49 days. Belief in ancestors who have died is such that, if the ancestor spirits are praised and given offerings, they will provide shelter to their offspring, but if they are not given offerings, they will cause harm [6] (Midori Katoni, 2001). Thirty to fifty years after a Japanese man dies, his spirit joins together with the whole family, and the spirit becomes a god (Matsudaira). It is considered that they would become a god / goddess of rice that secures the rice harvest and also maintain domestic harmony (Akata 1988; Nakamura; Ohkuni-Tierney; Yanagita 1975c: Orikuchi 1955a: Takeda C. 1979). However, the process does not stop here. A Goddess of rice is considered to salvage the harvest of rice (Ito, 50). Therefore, eating rice at funerals or



other celebrations energize and rejuvenate gods in their lives, who would otherwise fall back into a dirty place "(54). Hence the flow of life and death is conserved through the worship of ancestors and consumption of rice. A funeral needs to be done because it is believed to accelerate the process of the transformation of the spirit of the dead in becoming gods who will regenerate life.

In the Japanese life system, religiousness is very evident with the burial ceremony of the deceased. For example, the belief is that death is the final episode, so parting with that life should be celebrated as best as possible.

#### 5.4. Conclusion

Generally, people view death as an impure object that has to be avoided. However, businessmen in the funeral ceremony industry in Japan view this as an opportunity. Based on my analysis of the data I obtained from the Bellca funeral company, there are several important points to be noted, both from business and religious study perspectives.

Assuming the nationwide number of Bellca members is 2 million people, each paying 3,000 yen per month as “premium” to Bellca, this company would obtain around 6 billion yen per month or 72 billion yen per year. On average, Bellca holds around 35,000 funeral ceremonies in a year; each costs around 1 million yen on average. A gross estimate of Bellca costs would be 35 billion yen, leaving it with around 37 billion yen of cash money on hand. This business is considered to be more predictable than insurance on accidents, in which the insurance amounts vary wildly depending on the severity of the injury. In the funeral ceremony, the cost of a ceremony could be predicted beforehand.

During the economic crisis, the *gojokai* system that was used by Bellca to attract customers is very favorable to the funeral ceremony users, in which each member just has to pay a monthly fee of 3,000 yen for 200 months, and when the time comes, they don’t need to prepare a massive amount of cash to pay for the funeral. Furthermore, the funeral cost for members is considerably cheaper than for non-members.

One of the main factors that makes funeral ceremonies cost so much is the fact that the orders come unpredictably. Nobody knows when someone is going to die, so there is no way to prepare for the ceremony a while beforehand. In other businesses (e.g. restaurants), we can reasonably predict the number of customers. We can even invite more customers to come by putting discounts on the products or by offering presents. Those kinds of things

cannot be done in the funeral business. This makes the workload of the employees in a funeral ceremony company significantly depending on how many people die at a given moment. The waiting time between orders also costs money for the company. Based on my own experience, there was a time when no new order came in for nine consecutive days, so we just cleaned our own offices because there was nothing to do.

The satisfaction of the bereaved family is an indicator of the success of a funeral ceremony. Based on my interview with the funeral director at Bellca, there were a lot of experiences that make him feel flattered when the family of the deceased specifically expressed gratitude to him. This is the principle of the management of the Bellca funeral Company.

The cost of a funeral ceremony is divided into 3 parts: funeral settlement, food & drink entertainment expenses, and payment to religious people. The percentage of the cost for food & drink entertainment expenses is around 30% of the funeral ceremony cost. In my observations, the price of food & drink in *sogi kaikan* is higher than the price in regular restaurants. So there's a “plus alpha” value hidden in the foods and beverages served in a funeral ceremony. The Plus alpha value can be explained by the Meaning of Goods Theory.

Why should we hold a funeral ceremony? From the viewpoint of Japanese people, death is something impure. In order to purify the impurity, a funeral ceremony is needed. This ceremony also serves as the beginning for the deceased to enter the next life. The funeral ceremony itself has two components: purification and grief. Both were taken care of collectively by the community, but the responsibility is now taken over by the funeral company. It is very challenging for the funeral company to ensure the satisfaction of the customer (in this case, the family of the deceased), i.e. by witnessing the “happy ending” of the life of the deceased through the funeral ceremony. This task is not easy, and not everyone wants to do it, albeit they can. A lot of things must be prepared and performed in order to achieve such satisfaction which justifies making the funeral ceremony very expensive to hold.

The goods do have not only a functional value but also have a special meaning for social and culture. Foods for *otsuya* and *osoushiki* do fulfill not only hunger but also have a special meaning such that this would be the last time they eat together with the deceased in the same room, a once in a lifetime experience. Eating together with the deceased in the farewell atmosphere (*kuukan teki*) on the last night before the deceased is buried (*jikan teki*) is very special; therefore, so is the food consumed during *otsuya* and *osoushikiaa*.

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## VI. The Characteristics of Funeral Businesses in Japan

### 6.1. Introduction

In every business, there are particular characteristics that have to be understood properly in order for the business to be successful. Each business has different characteristics. For example, when you own a car business, you have to understand how cars are produced, how to sell them, how to finance the sale, what kind of person is appropriate to be an employee, etc. This concept also applies to the funeral business, which has its own characteristics. This business is very unique, and unlike many other businesses, has a strong relationship with the culture of a country.

To understand the special characteristics of the funeral business is essential to drive the business into the future and to always fulfill customers' demands. The study of the characteristics of the funeral business in Japan gives us a deep perspective of Japanese culture because it relates significantly to the belief, the religious style, and Japanese perspective of life and death.

To find out the characteristics of funeral ceremony business, I explore data from my fieldwork during 10 months in Bellca Funeral Company, Izumi branch. The research method mainly involves interviews with the workers at the place where funeral ceremonies are held. Supplementary data is obtained from Bellco Funeral Company's website. For a more comprehensive understanding of the funeral industry in Japan, I visited some funeral hall in the other city beside Sendai, Miyagi. I visited the funeral hall and had interviews with the staff of Hean Funeral Hall in Odawara, Kanagawa prefecture and also visit Funeral company of Soren zen group in Osaka. I also analyzed the films *Osoushiki* and *Okuribito*.

To explore how funeral ceremonies are conducted, I attended the funeral of Sekiguchi Fumio Sensei in Koriyama, Fukushima prefecture on 29 January 2013. I attended that funeral ceremony through an invitation from a sogiyasan. After received emails and phone calls from someone who worked at the funeral company, I went by bus from Sendai a distance of 80 km to Koriyama, Fukushima. He call me once more before it., just to make sure me to wearing a shirt an suit black color, black shoes and black socks too. And the special necktie with black colour. This is outfit is formal wear when you want to go mourn in Japan.

Funeral committees from the school planned the ceremony schedule. The retired president of the Kyushu tea company was selected as the head of the funeral committee, and the order seven committee members were high executives of both schools. The funeral was held at the auditorium of School, a hall that can hold 3,000 guests. The receptionist divide



ceremonies in a person's life. Among them, weddings and funerals are said to be the two major ceremonies, which are also the most costly.

Since its founding in 1969, Bellco has been hosting a number of its members' wedding ceremonies and funerals, the two big ceremonies of a person's life. The base started from Hyogo prefecture, and now the company has spread all over the country from Hokkaido to Kyushu. Bellco Company, headquartered in Osaka, is a group company with more than 300 branches throughout Japan. Bellco is the largest in terms of size and the number of facilities held by mutual aid associations across the country. The number of subscribers is around 2 million members nationwide. More than 35,000 people conduct a funeral ceremony at Bellco yearly.

Bellco has a very strong philosophy, i.e. to always think seriously, and deeply, to strive to hold a special funeral for the deceased ("deceased personality") and always to be able to feel the feelings of the bereaved family. One way to hold a special funeral for each of its clients is to identify the deceased's favorite things while he/she was alive. For example, for the customer who liked a particular flower, meal, hobby, etc., the company would strive to decorate the funeral ceremony with those things. In this way, the ceremony becomes an expression of the personality of the deceased, and the bereaved family would feel that the deceased is being well respected.

## 6.2. Internal Analysis

### 6.2.1. Human Resource Management

By observing several buildings in a number of cities (Kanagawa, Osaka, Shizuoka, and Sendai) where funeral ceremonies are held, I formed an impression that those buildings look serenity and have a darkish color tone. For examples buildings of the Bell Classic in Izumi Chuo, Sendai. This building has a darkish brown color. This building is located strategically, i.e. only 200 meters away from Izumi Chuo subway station, which makes the building easily reachable by clients and guests alike. From the outside, the building may seem to have no particular activity. However, at certain times, this building can suddenly be full of people dressed in black suits, including socks which are also of black color.

When I applied for a job in this place, I had some doubts when entering the building, especially during the interview, which was held on a cold basement floor. However, when I met with the employees, who were kind to me, those weird feelings were gone.



When we are talking about a person who is an undertaker, the first thing that comes to our minds is that such person would wear dusty brown or blue shirts, wide pants, and boots. However, the undertaker in a Japanese funeral hall dresses in a totally different manner. They normally wear formal suits with ties and shiny leather shoes. It would be difficult to differentiate between an undertaker, a millionaire, or a white collar employee in Japan. They wear such formal suits in all of their occupations, including during the moving the dead body.

They are the people responsible for moving the deceased from a “happy life” to a “beautiful death.” As stated by Ichijo Shinya in his book, “Romantic death,” dressing up the deceased is one of the main responsibilities of the undertaker. Furthermore, Shinya stated that the undertaker is an artist who transforms death into beautiful art.

The basic concept of funeral business is how to make death as a dirty become a beautiful death. This concept illustrated in the picture bellow

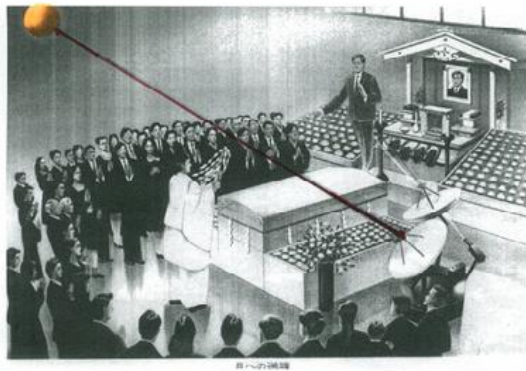


Figure 3. Concept of Funeral Business  
(Ichijo Sinya, Romantic Death, 2001, 3)

### Main Idea Sogi Business

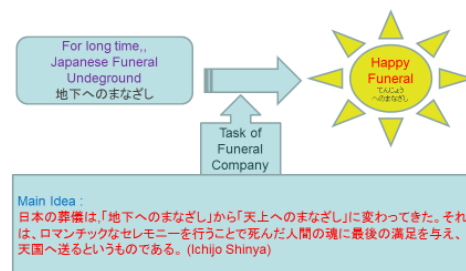


Figure 4. Task of Funeral Ceremony

The concept of Beauty Funeral, wrote by Ichijo Sinya in his book Romantic Death. For long time Japanese the Japanese vision of death has been of underground (chika no e manazashi) and not of celestial (tenjo no e manazashi). And this is the time to change the image of death by transforming funeral (Ichijo, 1990, 4,7). This motto of his work and he beleave that this is the task of Funeral industry.

## 2. フィールドワーク



Figure.5 . Schema of Fild work

Before we delve deeper into the central role of the undertaker in a funeral ceremony, let us review briefly the organizational structure of a funeral hall. This would enable us to relate the working relationship between the departments to one another. Next, we must discuss the job descriptions of the positions in each department.

The Bell Classic has 4 floors, i.e. 1 basement and 3 normal floors. In the basement, there are two separate parts, i.e. a place for arranging flowers (*saidan*) and a place for cooking the meals for the funeral ceremony. There is one more room in the basement which serves as a storage space for new coffins for the future deceased.

On the second floor, there is a special room for cleaning the body and two other rooms for the bereaved family to stay and rest for the night to “accompany” the deceased before the ceremony. The second floor, more or less, functions as a place to stay, which is why it has many facilities such as bathroom and toilets.

As for the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> floors, these are the places where funeral ceremonies are held. Both of these floors have similar facilities that enable the company to hold two separate funeral ceremonies at the same time. Throughout my 10 month stint at the company, there were two instances in which *otsuya* were performed on both the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> floors at the same time.

In terms of the description of management, there are three departments overall: funeral hall management, kitchen, and flower arrangement. I worked in the kitchen department because it was impossible for a foreigner to work in the ceremonial room which is

specifically reserved for *otsuya* and *osoushiki*. When I delivered the foods to the ceremonial room, I was required to wear a mask to cover my face so as not to be recognized as a foreigner by the guests.

There was 31 workers total who worked in Belco Izumi while I was working there, consisting of 13 permanent workers and 18 part-timers. In the food department (kitchen), there were 8 people total: 2 permanent and 6 part-timers (including myself). The main responsibility of the food department is to provide food for *otsuya* and *osoushiki* ceremonies.

The management of the funeral ceremony division consisted of 8 undertakers who were permanent workers and 10 assistants who were part-timers. Aside from that, there was also a receptionist who was responsible for serving the guests receiving phone calls. There were also 4 marketing people whose responsibility was to find new members for the mutual aid system.

Whenever we had worked through lunch time, we took a brief break. Usually, all the employees gathered during breaks, including those from the funeral hall, kitchen, and flower departments. These break times were opportunities to get to know each other and build a lasting, friendly relationship with as many people as I can. Throughout those 10 months, I always asked them about their working experiences in the funeral hall.

It was not easy to get the stories from the people who were in direct contact with the deceased bodies since they were under specific instruction from the company not to divulge information about the deceased and his/her family. In this case, Belco Co., Ltd. is responsible for correctly handling the personal information of its clients.

However, after maintaining good relationships with them for a couple of months, little by little, they were more open and willing to tell their stories to me about handling the deceased bodies. During the lunch break, at the smoking room, I smoked with them. They were speaking of stories amongst themselves about what they had just done in the morning. I think this was a kind of relaxation technique to handle the stress of handling dead bodies. They were telling each other stories to brag about their courage in handling the bodies. In the middle of their stories, I listened to them very carefully so as not to miss any information, even the subtle ones.

An undertaker, who prefers to stay anonymous, started his story while he was smoking his cigarette. One night, when he was working the night shift, there was a call from someone who requested him to go to her house. When he arrived at the caller's house, he was shocked from witnessing the corpse of a man who committed suicide by hanging himself from his house's ceiling. The deceased was a sushi restaurant owner. His wife appeared to be very

shocked with the untimely death of her husband. The undertaker then released the rope from the deceased's neck and proceeded to move the body to the center room of the house before taking it to the Bellco funeral hall in Izumi. While performing his duties, the undertaker was not allowed to wear gloves because it would imply that the undertaker is treating the deceased as just a body (*shitai*) and is not showing respect to the deceased's family.

The undertaker then handled the body throughout the process until the ceremony was finished. Not only did he have to properly handle the deceased, but he was also responsible for maintaining the spirits and emotions of the bereaved family. In the case of the deceased sushi owner above, the bereaved family became very close to the undertaker due to several reasons. The bereaved family requested that the death of the deceased be kept a secret. The undertaker was asked to prepare invitations and a funeral speech and to keep the suicide case secret from the public. The bereaved family only wanted the deceased to have a proper and normal funeral ceremony by keeping the suicide a secret. The difficult, yet important, tasks of managing the ceremony, while keeping a big secret from the extended family, acquaintances, and even the monk, were performed by the undertaker to achieve a proper and serene ceremony.

This was one of the worst examples that could be faced by an undertaker in doing his job, which is considered as dirty and not well-respected by most people. So why do these undertakers still want to perform their duties? Next, I will discuss the workers in the Bellco ceremonial hall, Izumi branch office where I worked for 10 months. Discussing their job descriptions can explain their motivations and reasons for being undertakers and keeping their not-so-joyful jobs.

The one question that I would want to find the answer to is why some people are doing this job? Is it because of the money? Or is it because most undertakers are relatively uneducated and they possess fewer opportunities in other sectors? In reality, the undertakers are paid higher than other workers at Bellco. Unlike some people would think, they actually are educated, people. Among the 31 workers at Bellco Izumi, 19 of them had a degree in various backgrounds. Meanwhile, in the kitchen department (where I worked), of 8 workers, only 3 had some type of degree.

As time passed, I became closer to them and managed to achieve a higher understanding of their jobs from their stories, both through chats during lunch breaks and during off-duty leisure time. Aside from work, I accompanied them when they played with radio-controlled mini cars, or “*rajikon*” as the most Japanese call them. Their stories mostly

got out during these kinds of activities. I kept on digging for information from them, especially regarding the reasons why they want to perform their jobs as undertakers.

One day after work, a particular undertaker, an acquaintance of mine, wanted to meet someone who used to be his client. He told me that the client was from a previous bereaved family who would always remember his help. This particular bereaved family kept on sending him presents and gifts, even though the funeral ceremony had taken place long ago. According to him, meeting with this client was just for the sake of drinking some tea and chatting about the previous deceased person. Why could he be so close with the family? One of the reasons is that the undertaker kept a big secret about the death in the family. The family members felt that there was nobody else whom they could talk with about this matter because clearly, they didn't want to discuss it with extended family or friends.

I got the impression from this undertaker that the gratitude from the client was important for him. The feeling of being respected and needed because he had helped the bereaved family became his major reason for keeping his job. This kind of feeling is also expressed in the film *Okuribito*, in which Daigo (the undertaker), who did not like his job at first, turns out to be willing to work wholeheartedly. In the story, there is a person who dies, and when Daigo went to the house to handle the body, there was a dispute among the family members. With full composure, Daigo attempts to resolve the dispute and the problems within and, at the same time, handles the deceased's body throughout the ceremony proceedings. The film closes on the note that the ceremony turns out to be fine, serene, and proper. The gratitude of the bereaved family is expressed in the form of a sincere, deep bow to Daigo, and, when he is about to go, the deceased's husband chases Daigo and presents some snacks to him. It is not about the snacks, but about the deep respect and gratitude expressed in the way the snacks are presented to Daigo.

From their stories, I could conclude that the core of the funeral ceremony company lies in the hands of the undertaker, i.e. *the person who handles the deceased's body, and the person who provides full-on service to the bereaved family*. According to Suzuki Hikaru, these two main roles of the undertaker make the funeral industry a substitute for community bonding.

After 4 months working at Bellco Izumi, I was invited to visit other branches of Bellco, in other cities, such as Aomori and Akita, to study about the food services at those branches. This activity was reciprocated by those other branches which sent their employees to Sendai to study about the food service at the Sendai branch. I obtained the information regarding why they were comfortable working at Bellco through these activities.

One of the best perks that were offered at Bellco branches throughout Japan is that the company provided free vacations for its employees. There is a vacation trip to Korea in May for several selected employees, who are selected from each department. In my department, the selected employee was Sasaki san, a lady in her 50s who often made tempura with me. From Bellco Izumi, there were 3 selected employees, 1 from the kitchen and 2 from the undertakers. Assuming that Bellco has 300 branches all over Japan, the vacation is granted to around 900 employees. In order to avoid an employee shortage due to the vacation, it is divided into two batches in a year.

After she was back from Korea, I kept on digging for information from Sasaki san regarding Bellco Company in general. The company expresses its gratitude to its employees who have worked well. From this point, I concluded that this is one of the ways the company establishes a lasting relationship with its employees. This might as well be the key to the company's success, as the company is working in a field which is strongly associated with "*Ningen kankei*" (in this case, the relationship between the clients and the funeral company). In other words, if Bellco cannot manage its relationship with its employees well, the employees, in turn, would not manage their relationship with Bellco's clients wholeheartedly.

The two most important groups of workers in a funeral company are the undertakers and the funeral conductors. The undertaker plays his role in moving the deceased body from the hospital or the family home, preparing materials for the funeral ceremony, and putting the body in the coffin. Meanwhile, the funeral conductor is responsible for managing the ceremony so it can be performed properly and as planned.

The conductor interacts with the bereaved family only after the body is put inside the coffin (which is done previously by the undertaker). The conductor first meets with the family a moment before the funeral. His job is to give explanations to the family and guide them throughout the process, from the funeral to cremation. The conductor is not needed for taking care of the body or moving the coffin. The core of their job is to provide direct service to the bereaved family.

Suzuki Hikaru explains in detail the relationship of positions between the undertaker and the conductor by providing an example from Kitakyushu, the place where she did her fieldwork. According to her, in a funeral hall, the position of the undertaker is higher than conductor because the undertaker is the one who is taking care of the body from the beginning of the death up to the funeral hall, where the ceremony takes place. Meanwhile, the conductor only takes over during the ceremony.



However, in the public's eye, the undertaker is considered to have a lower position than the conductor, which is apparent from his social status in the community. If we measure the hierarchy using marriage status, then it can be said that the undertaker's position is below the conductor. This is because there are many people who work as undertakers facing difficulty in finding spouses due to their jobs as undertakers. As described by Hikaru, there was a 23 years old undertaker in Moon Rise Kitakyushu who claimed always to hit a dead end in his love life whenever he told his girlfriend of his job as an undertaker (Hikaru, 2001;p153)

There was another person who had already married and decided not to tell his in-laws about his job as an undertaker. Apparently, this causes the undertakers to tend to find their spouses from amongst colleagues (fellow workers in a funeral company) or from the relatives of the workers at the funeral company. Oppositely, according to Hikaru, such problems are rare among funeral conductors.

The professionalism of the workers during the funeral ceremony is expressed by the conductors in delivering and managing the ceremony according to schedule. The pressure to keep with the time often becomes a problem in a ceremony that is strongly related to people's grief. Sometimes the situation becomes uncontrollable when the coffin is opened, i.e. when the grief of the bereaved family tends to flow uncontrollably. At that moment, the mourners tend not to be able to hold their tears, as so many of them are saying a few words to the deceased while they are putting flowers in the coffin. Furthermore, when it is time for *choji*, a kind of testimony about the deceased, the presence of grief among the mourners are felt even stronger than before. The other moment of grief is when the coffin is put inside a crematorium. When the red button is about to be pushed to cremate the body, the mourners cannot hold their tears. These times are when the professionalism of the conductor plays its role in controlling and managing the situations.

Based on my experience when I attended a funeral ceremony of a teacher in Koryoyama, there was an eerie silence when *choji* was read to the audience of the former students of the deceased, who had made names for themselves. The reading of *choji* <sup>30</sup>brought out nostalgia and memories, which made everyone start crying, including me. However, I did have a chance to observe the attitude of the conductor, who managed to keep his composure and his professionalism. After the ceremony, I went to him and asked him why he was not crying with everyone. He calmly explained that being a professional in a funeral industry meant to keep his distance from the death. The mourners could express their grief, but not the

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<sup>30</sup> refers to performances specifically expressing farewell to the deceased such as *choji* (memorial addresses being read) at the last part of a funeral ceremony

conductors. To express feelings is the opposite of professionalism, which requires someone to constantly paying attention and to always make rational decisions. Then I asked him how he managed to control his emotions. He answered that the key was not to relate the death of other people to the death of his family members. He must focus on the service aspect, and not on feeling the grief of the bereaved family.

Meanwhile, the professionalism of an undertaker is expressed when handling the deceased body, which is considered a “dirty” job. The undertaker moves the body from the hospital or family home to the funeral hall, cleans it, puts makeup on the body, dresses the body, and puts the body in the coffin for the funeral ceremony. The undertakers handle the body in a very professional way so that the bereaved family feels satisfied with the work. The funeral industry is considered very successful in rewriting the concept of the funeral ceremony into a clean and proper event.

Due to the market size of the funeral business, many companies of other sectors, like wedding hall services, Japan Agriculture (JA) and Co-op, have also launched funeral businesses. It is said that there are 5000 to 6000 funeral specialists of varying sizes nationwide. In addition, 70% are small-scale businesses with 10 or fewer employees. It seems that most are community-based and family managed or freelance companies.<sup>31</sup>

Of course, there are only a few large companies; only 1% of all companies have more than 300 employees, while 60% have less than 10 employees, and 93% of the funeral operators are small and medium enterprises.<sup>32</sup> Most of the small and medium enterprises are traditional funeral companies with suppliers that are made up of subcontractors. Traditional companies or old funeral companies will be in trouble. Since the funeral service is not an authorization dependent system, anyone can open a business if he or she want to get started.

This is the era that the consumers can choose their funeral companies freely. This is the end of the era in which the funeral is a taboo business. Consumers participate in live seminars and receive a booklet at the end. Recently, each funeral company has been forced to acquire more members, inviting them to the funeral hall, seminars, and other various events.

In middle of 2015, there was a funeral exhibition in Osaka. At the exhibitions and seminars, visitors consulted freely with the staff of the funeral company, even trying the coffins. Some visitors at the exhibition got into a coffin, lying down, while the funeral company’s staff closed the coffin, allowing only the face to be visible through a small hole.

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<sup>31</sup><http://sougiya-info.com/archives/153>

<sup>32</sup><https://www.tdb.co.jp/english/> (Examination of Teikoku Databank: 2011)



Figure 6. Client try Coffein in Exhibition in Osaka (2016)

<http://higashikurume.blogspot.jp/2015/07/japan-ashes-creative-ways-of-preserving.html>

Amidst the competition between funeral ceremony entrepreneurs, for those who think they are only profit oriented, it is necessary to be educated in the cultural values associated with religion and the Japanese idea of life after death. Funeral ceremonies, since they are very expensive, will only be liked if properly organized.

### 6.2.2. Marketing Management

In the film *Osoushiki*, we can see that the cost paid by the bereaved family to the *obosan* is rather subjective without any standard. It all depends on the “*kimochi*,” or feeling, of the bereaved family. However, the funeral ceremony service given by Bellco to its client is unlike what we see in the film. Instead it is based on negotiations between the two parties, such that there are no unsatisfactory feelings on both sides.

By explaining the details of the funeral ceremony process to the client (while he/she is still alive), it is hoped that the client will feel satisfied. This is because the funeral planning is subjective, customized, and very personal. Following this concept, Bellco has achieved 2 million members in its customer base. The discussion is explained in detail in the “funeral preparation” section.

Bellca provides consultations to its members of its *gojyokai* program. These kinds of consultations also serve to attract new Bellco members. Through the consultation, the member can obtain a full perspective on how his/her future funeral ceremony will be held. There are several points to be considered in the consultation:

#### 1. Imagine what kind of funeral the client wants to do

This is to answer the question “can you imagine what kind of funeral you would like?” Although I have attended a funeral, I think that very few people actually think about their own funeral. Some people think that it is a bad fortune to do so. So let's focus on specific points here.

## **2. Consultation about the cost of the funeral**

Depending on the person, the size and cost of the funeral will vary greatly. First of all, please try to imagine those who might want to come to your funeral. A person who wants to do a funeral only for family members whom he lives with is a general funeral. However, if it is to be attended by friends and acquaintances at a "family burial," with a small number of people, the scale changes significantly (depending on the number of people attending).

However, one thing I would want to keep in mind is that it is not as time-consuming or expensive if the scale is small. Recently, the "family funeral" popularity has been increasing in the cities, but as a result of the sending off of the deceased being done only by the family, there were only a few cases in which friends and acquaintances visited and burned incense for the dead. This has become a burden on both the body and mind.

## **3. Delivery of the Ending note**

If the deceased is associated with a religious belief, the form of the funeral process will be taken over by that religion. It is said that 90% of funerals are held in Buddhist-style ceremonies in Japan, but even in the case of Buddhism, the ceremonies differ depending on the sects. Recently, the non-religious funeral, which does not depend on formalities, has been increasing little by little, so it is good to think about what type of religion the funeral ceremony will be based on.

You can keep records of those whom you wish to inform about your funeral, sects, *bodhisattva*, etc. Recently, there are an increasing number of items in the market as well. Even at Bellco, we were handling customers who requested the note to be present when visiting the hall.

### **The contents of the last note include:**

- a. About the ceremony: List of people to inform of my death and contacts. If there are any requests with regards to the contents of the funeral, the client could record it in the note, e.g. the family funeral is good, play the music the client liked, etc.
- b. If the fee has been prepared, save the passbook, membership card, etc.

List the adherence to some religion or sect, and the existence of a family temple. If you want non-religious funerals, record that fact.

- c. Pictures the client would like to use as a portrait.

d. About the grave: what kind of grave would the client like?

#### **4. Visit the funeral home**

It is also possible to actually estimate the cost of your funeral while alive, known as a life estimate. Then, the content of the funeral that was vague becomes more concrete, and it is also more reliable for the family because it can help in making decisions on the type materials to buy, such as expensive or unlikely materials.

We are also carrying out tours from time to time in the hall of Bellco, so please come and visit to tour the site of neighboring halls at any time.

The four steps described above are performed by Bellco in order to recruit new members (mutual aid system). This turns out to be very effective because the member-to-be is given freedom to design his/her own funeral ceremony, so his/her satisfaction is somewhat guaranteed. Furthermore, when death eventually comes to the client, the last note could serve as a contract which is respected by both Bellco and the bereaved family. This enables Bellco to stay consistent on the discussed details written in the note.

Recently, Japanese consumers want a cheap priced funeral, or a discounted price funeral. Therefore Suzuki Hikaru (2000, pp. 6–7), who conducted fieldwork in a mutual-aid cooperative (gojokai) in Kyushu, Japan, analyzed standardized modern funerals (which she later termed “McFunerals,” or “McDonald-ized funerals,” 2003), and noted the various funeral services that have risen in response to such standardization and the changes in human relationships during funerals. Tanaka<sup>33</sup> said that the point in Suzuki’s work is that she paid attention to tripartite interactions between consumers (or social relationships), producers (or commodities and services), and cultural values as models with which to investigate the changing concepts of dying, death, and the deceased in contemporary Japan<sup>34</sup>

The specific of the marketing management in the funeral business is the market demand certainty. The demand of this business is the death body, and everyone will surely die. in line with this statement Norihisa Tomiyasu, founder, and president of Tear Corp., a publicly listed funeral home operator, said “There aren’t many businesses where you’re guaranteed a growing market and increasing demand,” (The Japan Times, Oct 2009)

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<sup>34</sup>Daisuke Tanaka, (2006), "Conceptualizations of Death in a Commercial Context: The Funeral Business in Present-Day Japan", Donald C. Wood, in (ed.) *Choice in Economic Contexts* (Research in Economic Anthropology, Volume 25), Emerald Group Publishing Limited, pp. 173 - 197

### 6.2.3. Service Management

To support and serve the client, Bellco possesses Hotel Bell Classic, the first place, 34 Wedding Ceremony Bell Classic locations, 6 other Wedding chapel locations, 14 costume salons, and 184 multipurpose halls. The company serves the clients 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year. Or in other words, there is no holiday when it comes to the client. Due to the nature of death, nobody knows the time of a death exactly, and, therefore, the anticipation of a reservation is unlikely.

In the standard service of the Bellco Funeral Company, when some member passes away, the following order of operations takes place: passing away, consultation, nokan, wake, and the funeral ceremony.



Figure 7. Flow chart of Funeral Ceremony

お葬式の流れ Source : <https://www.bellco.co.jp/sougi/flow/>

#### 1. Passing away

- a. The first thing to do when a family member passes away is to call the toll free number of the funeral ceremony company. And then request a death certificate from a doctor as necessary for the next procedure.

#### b. Pick up the deceased

#### 2. Consult with the staff at Bellco about :

- a. Funeral date, contents and expenses of the funeral, the story of the bereaved family, kind of ceremony related to the religious affiliation, how many people to invite to the ceremony, etc. The staff of Bellco will decide the date and time of the funeral while checking the circumstances of the bereaved families and those who will attend, the availability of the crematorium and the reservation status of the hall.
- b. The number of people at the funeral (osoushiki) and the wake (otsuuya) are very important to decide how big the place of the funeral (会場) needs to be. The facilities of the funeral company include various halls, and the staff will prepare an appropriate venue according



to the number of people. As for meals and gift items, they will decide according to the number of people.

- c. For members who have entered into Bellco, the company has a plan of regulation: they will ask the member what they would like to add, customize, or upgrade the facilities. For those who are not members, they decide by looking at the pictures and prices of set choices in brochures.
  - d. Confirmation of religion and denomination, the arrangement of priests, etc. If there is a religion or sect, the funeral will be taken over by the sect. The staff of the funeral company gives a consultation about the arrangement of monks and the market prices of offerings, and they will advise based on current market prices.
  - e. Estimation of the cost of the funeral. The member will receive the contents of the consultation and a detailed quote that expresses the cost of each item. Of course, it is also possible to make changes and additions at this point.
3. Nokan, or placing the corpse into the coffin.  
During embalming, the staff will clean the body of the deceased neatly, turned towards the bereaved. And then change the deceased's dress to a costume, and place make-up on the deceased. And, finally, put the body in the coffin.
  4. Otsuuya (Wake): The vigil over the body is held quietly, attended only by a small number of people who had been closest to him. The staff will give guidance step by step in the osuyaa room. It is common to burn incense in order of rank among the relatives after the readings by the monks. The staff in charge will guide all of the ceremonies.
  5. Funeral Ceremony: the proper funeral, called *kokubetsu-shiki* (告別式<sup>3</sup>), is usually on the day after the wake. The procedure is similar to the wake, and incense is offered while a priest chants a sutra. The ceremony differs slightly as the deceased receives a new Buddhist name (戒名, *kaimyō*; lit. "precept name") written in Kanji. This name is said to prevent the return of the deceased if their name is called. The length of the name also depends on either the virtue of the person's lifespan or more commonly, the size of the donation of the relatives to the temple, which may range from a generally common

name to the most elaborate names for 1 million yen or more. The high prices charged by the temples are a controversial issue in Japan, especially since some temples put pressure on families to buy a more expensive name. The kanji for these *kaimyō* are usually very ancient, and sometimes with esoteric meanings.

#### 6.2.4. Financial Management

Bellco Funeral Company is a funeral company under the *Gojyokai* scheme. Members of the mutual aid (Gojokai kainin) will become prospective customers when they fill out a membership card to prepare for the two big ceremonies of their lives. There are various ceremonies in a person's life. Among them, weddings and funerals are said to be the two major ceremonies, which are also the most costly.

The benefits of the Ceremony Mutual-Aid System are:

- Package deals for monthly fees of roughly 3000 yen
- Payment by installment
- Full range of funeral halls and facilities
- Advanced payment guarantee (half of the cost is set aside as a security deposit)
- Easy cancellation of membership (refund, less service charge)
- Information and other facilities for all members

### 6.3. External Analysis

**PEST analysis** (political, economic, social and technological) describes a framework of macro-environmental factors used in the environmental scanning component of strategic management. It is part of an external analysis when conducting a strategic analysis or doing market research, and gives an overview of the different macro-environmental factors to be taken into consideration. It is a strategic tool for understanding market growth or decline, business position, potential, and direction for operations.

The basic PEST analysis includes four factors:

- **Political** factors are basically how the government intervenes in the economy. Specifically, political factors have areas including tax policy, labor laws, environmental laws, trade restrictions, tariffs, and political stability. Political factors may also include goods and services which the government wants to be provided (merit goods) and those

that the government does not want to be provided (demerit goods or merit bads). Furthermore, governments have a high impact on the health, education, and infrastructure of a nation.

- **Economic** factors include economic growth, interest rates, exchange rates, and the inflation rate. These factors greatly affect how businesses operate and make decisions. For example, interest rates affect a firm's cost of capital and therefore to what extent a business grows and expands. Exchange rates can affect the costs of exporting goods and the supply and price of imported goods in an economy.
- **Social** factors include the cultural aspects and health consciousness, population growth rate, age distribution, career attitudes, and the emphasis on safety. High trends in social factors affect the demand for a company's products and how that company operates. For example, the aging population may imply a smaller and less-willing workforce (thus increasing the cost of labor). Furthermore, companies may change various management strategies to adapt to social trends caused by this (such as recruiting older workers).
- **Technological** factors include technological aspects like R&D activity, automation, technology incentives, and the rate of technological change. These can determine barriers to entry, minimum efficient production level, and can influence the outsourcing decisions. Furthermore, technological shifts would affect costs, quality, and can lead to innovation.

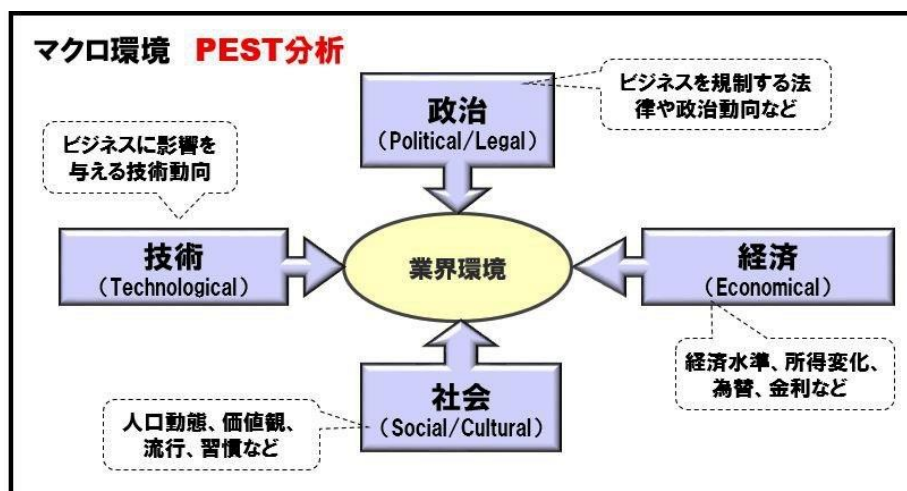


Figure 8. External Analysis (Source : <http://cyber-synapse.com/dictionary/en-all/pest-analysis.html>)

### 6.3.1. Politics

There is no law or regulation restricting companies from entering the funeral industry, nor is there any sort of government approval system. In other words, any company can run a funeral business. The only legal restrictions are regulations under the Installment Sales Law

concerning mutual-aid societies, and the Law Concerning Cemeteries and Interment. Even so, mutual-aid societies (advance-payment memberships) are not affected by the Installment Sales Law unless they are integrated into a business model. Moreover, the other laws merely cover matters such as the location of crematoriums and the interment of bodies (in cemeteries), areas that do not usually affect the operations of most funeral businesses. Operators' core funeral services (i.e. funeral ceremonies) are not subject to any special regulation.

A key success factor in entering the Japanese funeral market for foreign companies is to understand that Japanese funerals are closed in nature, meaning that it is rare for funerals to stray far from established Japanese customs. The funeral industry is strongly community-based, meaning that it takes considerable time and money to penetrate the market. Moreover, even if an operator offers inexpensive funerals, total costs tend not to vary significantly between businesses once the incidental costs leading up to the interment are added in. Incidental services, especially catering, transportation, and gifts must be subcontracted since few companies can provide a full range of services by themselves. Finally, it is important to note that the number of funerals varies dramatically, depending on factors such as the season. One way to combat this is to hire part-timers, but businesses need to make sure that their use of non-permanent staff does not lower the quality of service. To overcome such difficulties while still turning a profit, operators must establish close relationships with their local communities and service providers.

### 6.3.2. Economy

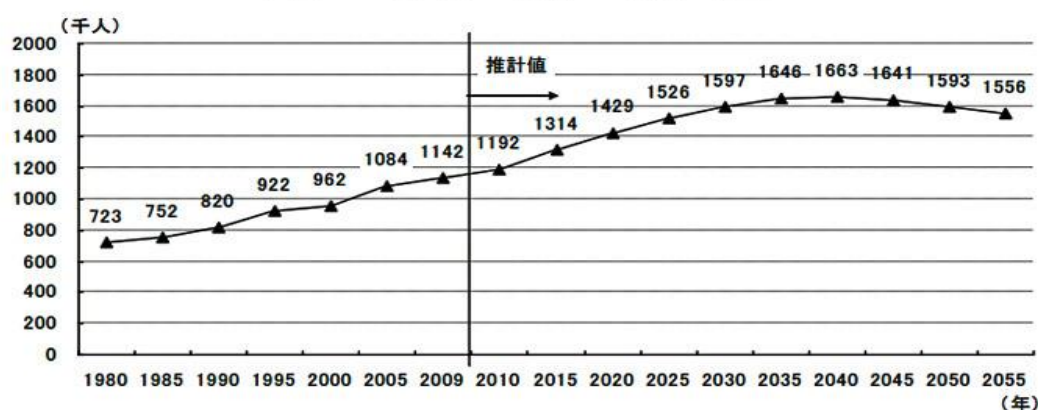
To find out how big the funeral business is in Japan, we can see the report of JETRO.<sup>35</sup> To calculate the scale of the funeral market, there are two methods. First, industry organizations put the scale at approximately ¥1 trillion, and the calculation includes average annual sales per funeral operator (¥110 million) multiplied by the number of operators (6,500), or over ¥700 million, plus sales of incidental services. The number of deaths in 2004 came to 1.02 million, suggesting that the average cost per funeral was around ¥1 million. However, this does not include sales of indirect services, such as gifts, transportation, and catering which provided by businesses not directly involved in the funeral. The second method is a method of calculation which includes sales of indirect services, estimated at roughly ¥650,000 per funeral, which puts the average price at ¥1.65 million and the market at ¥1.68 trillion.

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<sup>35</sup>JETRO Japan Economic Monthly, February 2006

The Japan Consumers Association, using a questionnaire survey about funerals, conducted a 10 fiscal report investigation, noting that the average funeral cost, on the national level, is about 1,267,000 yen (paid to the funeral company). Nationally, the amount of funeral ceremonies in the Japanese market is shown in the figure below. In 2008, the number of deaths per year amounted to 830,000 people. And this number is constantly increasing every year and expected to reach a peak in 2039 with 1.663 million people, and then decline thereafter year by year. If the average cost of a funeral ceremony is ¥1,267,000, in 2039 the amount of the cost of funeral ceremonies will have reached ¥2.18 trillion.

図表 1 我が国の将来死亡者数の推計



出所) 国立社会保障・人口問題研究所「日本の将来推計人口(2006年12月推計)」の出生中位・死亡中位仮定による推計結果。本推計では、出生と死亡について、それぞれ中位、低位、高位の仮定を設定して推計を行っている。

Figure 9. Graph of Japan Population and The number of Death (Japan Consumer Association 2008)

Falling prices and the growing preference for funeral halls are trends seen more in populated urban areas. Success is beginning to hinge largely on whether or not an operator has its own funeral hall and related facilities, so ownership is on the rise amongst operators of all sizes. But setup and running costs can be excessive, particularly for smaller operators, which has forced many operators out of business. Nonetheless, without such facilities, it is difficult to respond to customers' needs and also attract new customers. As a result, an increasing number of smaller companies have teamed up to own facilities jointly. But this can also create other problems since operators' respective interests sometimes conflict, so many cases of joint ownership have ended in failure. While business development opportunities abound, the fact that success largely depends on direct ownership of facilities is likely to force smaller operators to reorganize.

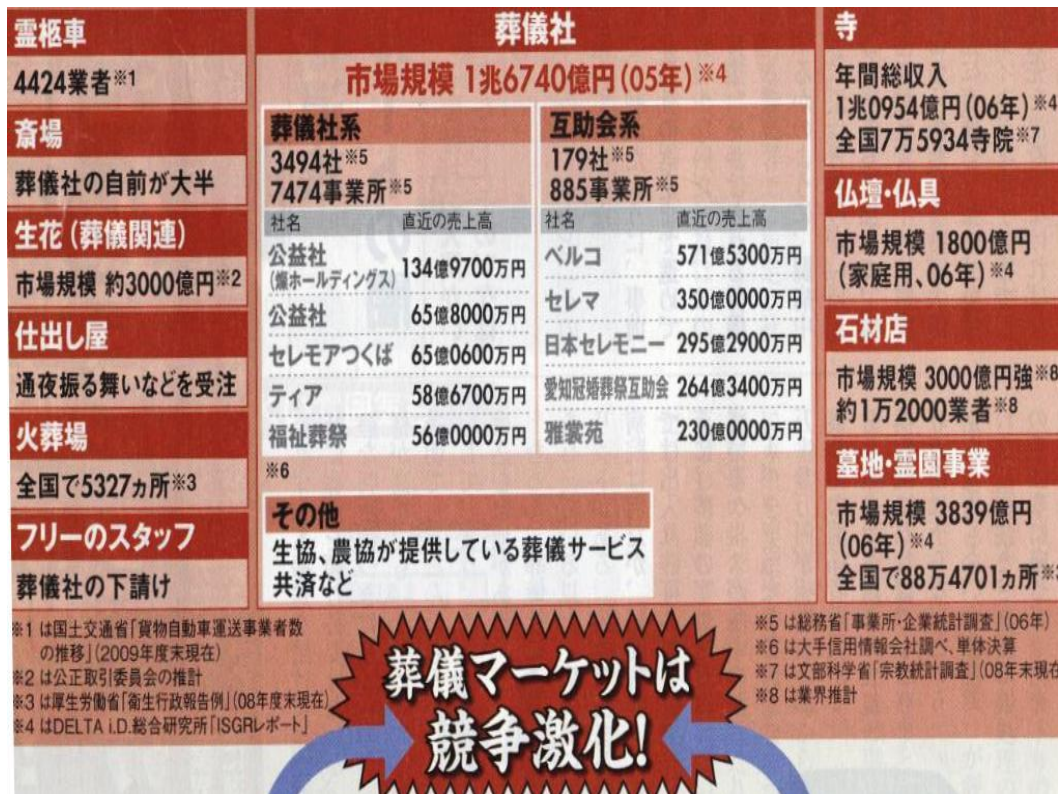


Figure .10 Market Size of Funeral Ceremony in Japan (Diamond Magazine, 2013)

### 6.3.3. Society and Culture

Based on research conducted by Yano Research<sup>36</sup>, there has been a change in Japanese society with respect to the selection of the venue for funeral ceremonies. The question posed in the research is: what is the reason that makes people prefer a home or community center over a shrine, temple, church, etc.? Some of the most common answers are: increasing difficulty to secure sufficient space for the ceremony, impracticality of holding a ceremony in an apartment block or high-rise building, and neighborhood relationships are weakening. And as for why people are not interested in using shrines, temples, churches, etc. for funeral ceremonies, here are the answers from the research results: declining interest in religion, weakening ties with Buddhist practitioners, and unclear pricing and cost differences among shrines, temples, and churches.

JETRO reported that falling prices and the growing preference for funeral halls are trends seen more in populated urban areas. Success is beginning to hinge largely on whether or not an operator has its own funeral hall and related facilities, so ownership is on the rise

<sup>36</sup> Yano Research Institute, 2002 White Paper on the Funeral Industry



amongst operators of all sizes.<sup>37</sup> But setup and running costs can be excessive, particularly for smaller operators, which has forced many operators out of business. Nonetheless, without such facilities, it is difficult to respond to customers' needs and also attract new customers. As a result, an increasing number of smaller companies have teamed up to own facilities jointly. But this can create other problems since operators' respective interests sometimes conflict, which caused many cases of joint ownership to end in failure. While business development opportunities abound, the fact that success largely depends on direct ownership of facilities is likely to force smaller operators to reorganize.

However, industrialization and urbanization resulted in an increasing number of nuclear families and aged households. For many people, it became more difficult to rely upon care from personal family in their old age.<sup>38</sup> The government, to cope with this situation, introduced various programs that allow elderly people to enjoy more freedom. It is reported that more and more elderly couples think it a good idea to live alone even after losing a partner. The elderly people, if they have enough money, can enjoy this freedom and independence. It is true that the percentage of aged people living alone has been increasing year by year.

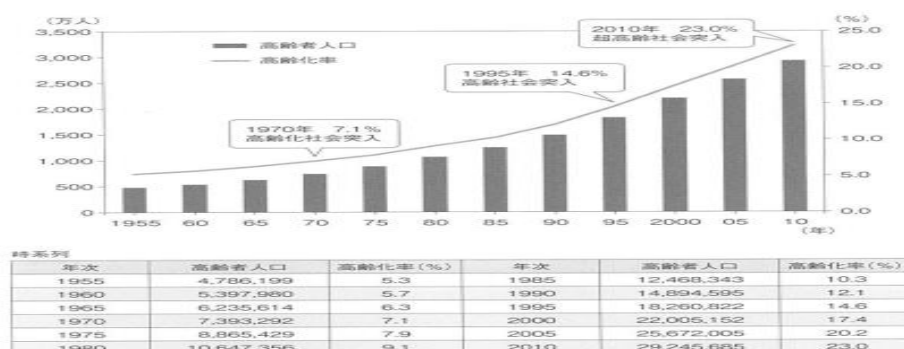
The current aging generation believes that more money will guarantee their happiness. Therefore they worked during the high economic growth period and accumulated substantial assets. This generation also has a better pension and medical programs. This generation includes the pioneers of the new lifestyle after World War II. Now, they have different ideas about old age, preferring freedom and a more easygoing lifestyle. Even though they are enjoying their own lifestyle, however, the time will come when they will lose a partner or become physically disabled. They will need someone's help and care. People will eventually die and need someone to prepare their funerals.

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<sup>37</sup>JETRO Japan Economic Monthly, February 2006

<sup>38</sup> Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2004 Population Census: Deaths and Mortality Rate (per 1,000 people) According to Age Group and Sex, and Mortality Gender Ratio

## 高齢者人口と高齢化率の推移



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Figure 11. Senior Citizen and the number of Death (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2004)

As the number of funerals increases for Japan's aging population, funeral prices continue to fall in line with growing demand for simpler funerals, so the market is leveling off. (JETRO)

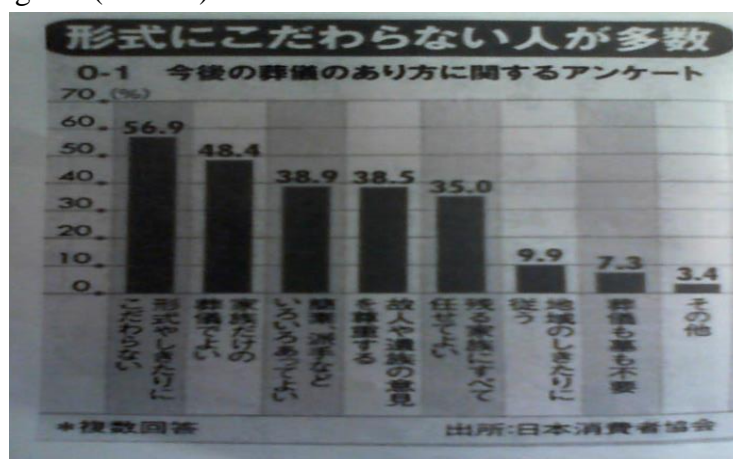


Figure 12. Consumer Research (Japan Consumer's survey, 2009)

In line with the result of Japan Consumer's survey, there is 56,9% correspondent answer that they are not obsessed with good form funeral and tradition. As Japan's population ages and religious practices wane in larger cities, more people are looking for a cheaper option. The Japan Times (OCT 22, 2009) wrote that in Tokyo, a third of families choose to cremate without a funeral service, said Midori Kotani, a senior research director at Dai-ichi Life Research Institute Inc.<sup>39</sup> "People are very concerned about the money," Kotani said. "They don't want the family to spend hundreds of thousands of yen to pay a priest to chant Buddhist scriptures they don't believe in."

**Recent developments regarding public demand about the cheap funeral,** Shimada Hiromi (2016) published new term of the funeral, *Zero-so: Assari shinu* or Zero

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2009/10/22/national/funerals-a-growth-undertaking/#.WGuLjht97tI>

funeral. Zero funerals, its mean how to die a simple death. This means that there is no need for the family to pay for a grave either.<sup>40</sup>

#### 6.3.4. Technology

##### 6.3.4.1. Embalming Technology

Although the funeral ceremony has an image that has kept with tradition for a long time, it, in fact, incorporates various technologies and ideas that have changed in form over time. For example, the utilization of dry ice eliminated the work of preserving the body overnight, changing the program of the evening. And a spectacular funeral procession with the appearance of a hearse is no longer required.

Sometimes, it takes 2 to 3 days at the shortest, from death to cremation. In the Tokyo metropolitan area, where there are few crematories compared to a large number of deaths in the population, it is not unusual to increase the time to about one week, depending on the schedule. As a result of such circumstances, specifically in large cities, the technique called "embalming" has been drawing attention as a method of keeping bodies clean in the period of time until cremation.

The body of humans and animals will decompose rapidly after death. For this reason, the body, after death, is immediately cleaned by washing or alcohol wiping, and treated so that body fluids do not flow out. Furthermore, in order to be able to depart in a pure appearance, it is common to suppress corpse deterioration with dry ice and antiseptic after applying makeup such as hair styling or "death makeup" to the corpse. Other names include corpse treatment, or post-mortem treatment, the make-up of the corpse, preservation treatment of the body (dry ice), etc. However, in case of a death at a hospital with a service system, post-mortem procedures such as washing, wiping, and the make-up of the body will be done at that hospital, so, in that case, the funeral company will provide other reasonable services such as "dead body preservation treatment" by applying dry ice, antiseptic, etc.

In recent years, new corpse treatment methods have become widespread. One is embalming. Embalming is an antiseptic treatment of the remains of a person that originated from ancient Egyptian in the making of mummies. However, the spread of embalming was

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<sup>40</sup> No.32 ,Society ,Discussions Jun 05, 2016

What does the future hold for funerals in Japan?

Discussion between Shimada Hiromi and Murakami Kokyo

triggered by the Civil War in America in the second half of the 19th century. It was due to need to move the dead bodies back to their homeland as they were. Embalming was done to President Lincoln, who has assassinated shortly afterward; people witnessed the effect of it and began to rapidly popularize embalming in North America. At the end of the nineteenth century, techniques leading to embalming, namely the vascular method, have been developed, and now 90% of the remains of North America are subjected to embalming. Approximately 70% in Northern Europe and the UK also apply embalming as a method of general body treatment. When sending bodies overseas, it is necessary to embalm.<sup>41</sup>

Full-fledged embalming in Japan began in 1988, and it was applied to 12,204 bodies in 2002, as the numbers are increasing year by year.<sup>42</sup>

The outline of the treatment of embalming is as follows :

- (1) Undress and check the whole body for damaged parts.
- (2) Disinfection/cleaning. Sterilize the whole body with a spray, wash, and shampoo.
- (3) Sterilization of oral cavity
- (4) Shaving
- (5) Face treatment: sew the mouth closed, adjust the shape, insert eye caps into the eyes, and arrange the face.
- (6) Anatomy of the artery/vein and connection of the injection pipe/discharge pipe: a small incision is made in the skin, and a vein at the same site as the artery near the body surface is dissected. Connect the injection pipe from the embalming machine to the artery, connect the discharge pipe to the vein.
- (7) Injection of pre-preserved solution and discharge of blood
- (8) Injection of the antiseptic fixing solution: methyl alcohol, formalin, and other antiseptic fixing liquids are injected so as to spread through the whole body while massaging the body. This medicine is blended with pigment and gives a reddish appearance to the body's face.
- (9) Infusion of antiseptic solution into the body cavity: a small incision is made on the part of the body cavity, and the content is discharged before a preservative solution is injected.
- (10) Suturing of incision
- (11) The whole body wash
- (12) Repair: repairing of damaged parts.
- (13) Clothing and makeup.

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<sup>41</sup><http://www.sogi.co.jp/sub/kenkyu/itai.htm>

<sup>42</sup>ibid

In embalming, it is necessary to sterilize the inside of the body to make it safe for public health, slow decomposition, and relieve the feelings of the bereaved by arranging and restoring the face, etc. The corpse is a public health danger as it is a nest of infectious diseases. Embalming is currently the best scientific method as a defense against infections. Embalming recognizes the importance of repairing accident/disaster ridden bodies and bodies damaged from dissection.

#### **6.3.4.2. Funerals in the internet era**

During my fieldwork at Bellca Funeral Company, internet usage in the business of funeral services had many benefits, especially in determining the cost of the funeral. Clients could access the website and estimate the cost of their own funeral. The cost of the funeral ceremony is divided into 3 parts: namely, the cost of the funeral hall management, the cost of food and drink, and the cost of the obosan. The cost of the funeral hall can vary depending on the choice of the client. The cost of food and drinks for the sushiki & otsuya also has several options, and the cost can be planned before. Even the cost for the prayer person, or obosan, can be calculated alone. The internet in the funeral business is very helpful for consumers because the prices of funerals are so transparent. The same was not possible for costumers of funeral companies in 1980.

#### **6.3.4.3. Natural Ashes Scattering**

Scattering ashes is not illegal, but it must be done on public land. Some forests and mountains are private lands, so scattering ashes must in the public domains or sea and must avoid fishing areas such as coasts, rivers, and ponds. The ashes should not contain pieces of bones, and it should be in powder form. Putting ash under the soil is prohibited because it is considered as burying rather than scattering, and it is illegal.<sup>43</sup> There are businesses which scatter ashes into the sea for fees around 50,000-200,000 yen. There is also an island which officially allows scattering ashes, but the fee is expensive (265,000 yen).

In Japan, there is an uninhabited island, Kazura Island, at the entrance of Suwa Bay in Omi-who, Oki-gun, Shimane Prefecture, which is a natural scattering place.<sup>44</sup> As a science laboratory, it is an unprecedented facility in that it is self-regulating. Scattering, granulating, and quantity is taken into consideration for the environment. As the biggest feature, Kazura is designated as a "Type I special region" of the Oyama Oki National Park, based on the Natural

<sup>43</sup>[https://www.reddit.com/r/japan/comments/3vig8j/what\\_should\\_i\\_know\\_about\\_scattering\\_ashes\\_in\\_japan/](https://www.reddit.com/r/japan/comments/3vig8j/what_should_i_know_about_scattering_ashes_in_japan/)

<sup>44</sup><http://www.kazurajima.jp/kazura/>

Parks Law. In Class I special areas, all buildings and structures are not recognized areas, and Kazura Island is reserved as an uninhabited island which is left to nature, untouched by human hands. On the other side, this island has a memorial facility where people can organize a farewell ceremony and leave a dedication or mark, noting the date of death.

Rules from the governor are needed to facilitate natural burials (scattering ashes). The growing demand for simple funerals in part reflects the increasing number of people who want to conduct natural burials. Natural burials in Japan mainly consist of scattering ashes at sea or in the mountains. Services are offered by a number of companies, such as the NASDAQ-listed Sun Life Group. More than 30% of people under 50 say they would like their ashes to be scattered, compared to less than 20% of those 60 or older. Although a law states that remains must be buried in a cemetery, the law only applies to conventional burials, meaning that there is no law prohibiting ashes from being scattered. At present, however, natural burials are carried out with the implicit understanding that they should be performed with restraint. Although natural burials offer the advantage of being simple and inexpensive, they have many problems, such as damaging the image of areas where ashes are scattered. In the past, there have been a number of cases of disputes with local communities where ashes have been scattered. An ordinance banning the practice was even passed in a part of the northern island of Hokkaido, where great numbers of people were scattering ashes, and this triggered similar bans and restrictions throughout Japan. If the practice of scattering ashes gains more popularity, rules will first need to be devised.

In the Tokyo metropolitan area, there are companies that provide storage services for ashes. The basic idea is that the cemetery, as a place to store the ashes, is very expensive. Normal graves cannot be nested in 20 floors, or higher, buildings. Land, in the city of Tokyo, is very expensive and impossible to be made into graves. Therefore a company made a 20-story building that specifically stores the ashes of the deceased. The ashes are stored in small jars, approximately 10 cm high and 7 cm wide, and are placed into a large cupboard which can be opened electronically by an ID card belonging to a member.





Source: <http://higashikurume.blogspot.jp/2015/07/japan-ashes-creative-ways-of-eserving.html>

#### 6.3.4.4. Technology in Marketing services

Due to the big market of funerals, especially in anticipation of the peak of the market in 2039, a lot of companies want to enter into this type of business. In chapter V before, I already mentioned that one key to success in this business is to own facilities where funerals can be conducted. Another factor is that the ‘brand’ of the company is well known by customers because customers are more confident with the company that already has a good reputation. For this reason, new businesses in the funeral market take a shortcut by buying a franchise from a famous funeral company.

For example, Epoch Japan has been expanding franchise operations based on its “Famille” range of inexpensive family funeral packages. Several other funeral operators have also introduced franchise systems, such as Heian Ceremony Service.

There are many benefits of the franchise systems<sup>45</sup>: Standardized prices are more transparent, price negotiations result in more cost cutting. Standardized services and standardized systems make for lower costs, and branding makes for more consumer trust.

#### 6.4. Conclusion

After I analyzed many funeral business data form many source, I found several characteristic of Funeral Businesses in Japan ;

The concept of Beauty Funeral, wrote by Ichijo Sinya in his book Romantic Death. For long time Japanese the Japanese vision of death has been of underground (chika no e manazashi) and not of celestial (tenjo no e manazashi). And this is the time to change the

<sup>45</sup> JETRO Japan Economic Monthly, February 2006

image of death by transforming funerals. This motto of his work and he believes that this is the task of the funeral industry.

The key success in funeral business underlies the undertaker. They are the people who are responsible for moving the deceased from a “happy life” to a “beautiful death.” Dressing up the deceased is one of the main responsibilities of the undertaker. Furthermore, they are an artist who transforms death into beautiful art.

Now (2016), is the era that consumers can choose their funeral companies freely. This is the end of the era in which the funeral is a taboo business. Consumers participate in live seminars and receive a booklet at the end. Recently, each funeral company has been forced to acquire more members, inviting them to the funeral hall, seminars, making the prospective customers try to get into the coffin, and other various events.

The result of Japan Consumer's survey, there is 56.9% corresponding answer that they are not obsessed with good form funeral and tradition. In line with this research, Midori Kotani said, “People are very concerned about the money, they don't want the family to spend hundreds of thousands of yen to pay a priest to chant Buddhist scriptures they don't believe in.”

I think in the future, the funeral business will become more cheap. Maybe the best model of funeral business in the future is the franchise system, like McDonald. There are many benefits of the franchise systems: Standardized prices are more transparent, price negotiations result in more cost cutting. Standardized services and standardized systems make for lower costs, and branding makes for more consumer trust.

To answer the client's objections in paying the cost of funeral, maybe the best system is mutual aid system. The client only pays the amount of money around 3000 yen per month. This system provides services that, for members only charged 60% of the cost of funeral if the member dies.

## VII. Conclusion

The history of funerals before the second world war by the traditional community (Kumi Society), by taking the principle that the funeral ceremony is a shared responsibility of society. If someone of the community member death, every member of the community helps the drive family to conduct funeral ceremony. Tasks such as is done every member of society without paying them, as volunteer. In the next time, if our family member death, they will helping us. Symbiosis Reciprocal symmetric relationships like this that coloring society Kumi before the World War II. In the postwar, the tasks of Kumi community replace by the funeral company. Services of funerals ceremony, not only grow as a business, but this business quickly becomes abig industry with a large scale. This is caused by the increase of the population is concentrated in urban areas.

I have been doing research on a ceremony that conducts in Ichiyanagi Funeral company in the period 1921-1977. There are two points that I have observed, namely: type of funeral ceremony and the altar at the funeral ceremony. There are some notes I got from my research in Ichiyanagi. The majority of the user of the ceremony is an executive of the company, business man, and the political leader. They make a “change” of the funeral ceremony to become more free and flexible in expressing their last respects to the deceased. And based on my observation the need of more freedom funeral in Aichi prefecture has begun in the period of 1950-1960. Base from data of the user of funeral ceremonies from this company, we can say that the emergence of a new type of funeral have begun by a group of rich people and have wide influence in society. And Ichiyanagi as an innovator in the funeral industry understand it and take this business opportunity to become big business.

To better get an overview, I observed the solemnization of death were posted on the magazine SOGI over the next 20 years (1990 – 2010). Based on my observation, there are some notes relate to my research questions. The majority of the deceased (789 persons) whose funerals were published in Sogi magazine (period 1990-2010) were people who died around 75 years of age. Many of them retired from their jobs and society. They prepared their funerals before their death, as a final expression of their death in order to give a happy ending to their funerals. They do their best to plan for their funeral ceremony and to show off their social status. Sometimes, the family of the deceased display various things related to the deceased on the altar. For example, they put a golf club which is related to the hobby of the

deceased. In other cases, they put an image of the favorite car of the deceased. Sometimes they put a microphone to show that the deceased was a journalist. In other instances, they showed the success story of the deceased with slides on the screen. Many businessmen showed their success story with a symbol or logo of their company on the altar. The freedom to express the success story of the deceased in the funeral ceremony seems to increase year by year. The majority of the deceased who held funeral ceremonies were either business leaders or political leaders. They had wide and powerful influences in the community. They were public figures, so what they did will serve as a role model for the society. Their funeral ceremonies were usually published in the magazine and other media and became models of other funeral ceremonies.

The cost of a funeral ceremony is divided into 3 parts: funeral settlement, food & drink entertainment expenses, and payment to religious people. The percentage of the cost for food & drink entertainment expenses is around 30% of the funeral ceremony cost. In my observations, the price of food & drink in *sogi Kalkan* is higher than the price in regular restaurants. So there's a “plus alpha” value hidden in the foods and beverages served in a funeral ceremony. The Plus alpha value can be explained by the Meaning of Goods Theory.

Why should we hold a funeral ceremony? From the viewpoint of Japanese people, death is something impure. In order to purify the impurity, a funeral ceremony is needed. This ceremony also serves as the beginning for the deceased to enter the next life. The funeral ceremony itself has two components: purification and grief. Both were taken care of collectively by the community, but the responsibility is now taken over by the funeral company. It is very challenging for the funeral company to ensure the satisfaction of the customer (in this case, the family of the deceased), i.e. by witnessing the “happy ending” of the life of the deceased through the funeral ceremony. This task is not easy, and not everyone wants to do it, albeit they can. A lot of things must be prepared and performed in order to achieve such satisfaction which justifies making the funeral ceremony very expensive to hold.

The goods do have not only a functional value but also have a special meaning for social and culture. Foods for *otsuya* and *osoushiki* do fulfill not only hunger but also have a special meaning such that this would be the last time they eat together with the deceased in the same room, a once in a lifetime experience. Eating together with the deceased in the farewell atmosphere (*kuukan teki*) on the last night before the deceased is buried (*jikan teki*) is very special; therefore, so is the food consumed during *otsuya* and *osoushikiaa*.

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